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Gender Differences in Mobilization for Collective Action: Case Studies of Villages in Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Men and women participate in collective action for different purposes in northern Nigeria. Field work conducted in six villages show that while men engage in community activities such as road repairs, maintenance of schools and hospitals, refuse collection and maintenance of the traditional village government, women mobilize around activities such as savings, house and farm work and care giving. It is argued that men mobilize around community activities outside the home because of their public orientation and because they want to maintain their dominance of that space. Women, in contrast, mobilize around activities in keeping with their domestic orientation and traditional roles such as care giving and housework. Religion also influences the extent of women's participation in collective action. Because men have command of community institutions, they are better able to access the resources embedded in these institutions, but women are able to negotiate within established social structures for better conditions. Given the socio-cultural characteristics of communities in northern Nigeria, an effective strategy for collective action is collaboration between men's and women's groups rather than separatism or integration.

Keywords: Northern Nigeria, gender, collective action, community participation, social capital, village associations

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Saratu Abdulwahid¹

INTRODUCTION

Participatory development is often regarded as a panacea for the shortcomings of earlier development approaches. The premise of participation is that development should be situated in the social, political, and economic contexts of the people involved. This is based on the assumption that poverty results from factors embedded in structural conditions which shape people's lives (Oakley 1991). Thus, in order to tackle poverty, it is necessary to enable people to participate in decisionmaking about events that control their lives, which will ensure that development does not by-pass them as it had done in the past (Chambers 1997a; Oakley 1991; Hoogvelt 1997; Mohan 2002).

The concept of participation is viewed from two main perspectives. One view sees participation as instrumental whereby participation increases the efficiency of development programs (Mohan 2002). The alternative view to the efficiency perspective sees participation as an empowering and transformative process, which enables local people to conduct their own analysis, to take command, to gain in confidence, and to make their own decisions (Chambers 1997a; Chambers 1997b; Freire 1976; Illich 1984; Sen 1997; Nelson and Wright 1995; Guijt and Kaul Shah 1998; Guijt and Cornwall 1995). The 'efficiency' view takes the approach that the goals of development can be improved by involving beneficiaries. This

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perspective considers participation as a means of accomplishing the aims of a project more efficiently and cheaply (Chambers 1997a; Nelson and Wright 1995). This school of thought influences the neo-liberal agenda on the use of the concept of social capital (Mayoux 2001). In this perspective, participation is articulated as formation of groups, associations, and institutions, which comprise civil society (Lewis 2002). Existing connections between people in terms of local groups and associations are substitutes for financial collateral used in the selection of loan beneficiaries. It is also a means of reaching the poor who have no access to such resources (Sen 1997; Mayoux 2001).

The availability of stocks of social capital is seen as necessary for positive outcomes for individuals, groups, and the community as a whole. Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2001) note that social capital leads to a stream of benefits that includes information sharing, mutually beneficial collective action and decisionmaking. Other benefits identified include the creation of human capital which could lead to economic development (Coleman 1988), support and mutual assistance (De Haan 2000) and democracy and good governance (Putnam 1993; Fukuyama 2001). The attributes of social capital, namely connections, horizontal networks, cooperation, sharing, and associational activity, lead to positive development for individuals, groups, and communities. This was indicated in findings from research in Tanzanian villages which showed that voluntary association and dense connectivity had the potential to lead to greater cooperation and, in turn, better outcomes (Narayan and Pritchett 1997).

With respect to the political functions of social capital, Fukuyama (2001) argues that:

it is only by coming together in civil associations that weak individuals became strong; the associations they form could either participate directly (as in the case of a political party or interest group) or could serve

as 'schools of citizenship' where individuals learn the habits of cooperation that would eventually carry over into public life.

The importance of access to other people and institutions in collective action and the idea of using community associations and groups as means of involving people in the development of their communities are well-recognized. However, less attention has been paid to gender and associated power dynamics which are factors that are likely to influence access to community groups and associations and the resources they hold.

This study focuses on gender and social capital in northern Nigeria in an attempt to fill some of the knowledge gaps which exist in the field of gender relations as it impacts on collective action and access to resources. Collective action in this study refers to the spirit of cooperation as indicated by those activities that members of a community do collectively in order to improve their communities and support each other in times of need. Some of these activities are carried out through groups and associations in the community and are structured in terms of organization, targets, labor, and materials, whereas others do not have defined structures.

The following section of this paper reviews some of the literature on the importance of participatory development and social capital and contrasts this with the relative lack of attention to gender relations. The third section presents the six study villages in terms of their overall socioeconomic characteristics, including gender relations and key institutions. The fourth section describes the methods used in the study, followed by findings on gender and social capital in the fifth section. The concluding section highlights the need to take account of the social context, including the power and gender structures as which shape social interaction and the kinds of social capital that men and women access.

GENDER, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

Despite the growing attention to social capital in the literature, it is recognized that not all kinds of social capital lead to positive outcomes. The conditions deemed necessary for development of beneficial social capital are voluntary cooperation, horizontal networks, and crosscutting ties (Narayan 2000; Putnam 1993; Granovetter 1974; Coleman 1988; Fox 1996; Quigley 1996; Narayan 1997). Bridging social capital between groups is important in opening up opportunities to people in more vulnerable positions or excluded groups (Bebbington et al. 1997). Crosscutting ties build social cohesion, which is an important element in social stability and economic welfare over any extended period. Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2001) notes that benefits realized from participating in internally heterogeneous associations are higher than from those that are homogeneous. Associations where members differ in economic attributes yield more benefits to members than associations whose members differ only in demographic attributes. In sum, group heterogeneity in terms of membership, economic attributes, and location are more beneficial to people because they sustain trust and cooperation between community members.

Other authors argue that sometimes a combination of horizontal and vertical networks or interaction between top-down and bottom-up initiatives are necessary for the emergence of sustainable development (Woolcock 2001; Ostrom 1996). While it is agreed that empowerment has to come from within (Sen 1997), the involvement of the state or other agencies as facilitators is also important (Rowlands 1995; Rowlands 1997). This view is

pertinent to an analysis of empowerment, especially in the context of northern Nigeria where people live within differentiated social contexts in terms of history, religion, and ethnic groupings, but experience participation in collective action promoted by the state as supporters of community based associations.

Despite the potential advantages of social capital in terms of associational activity, it also can have negative aspects, the most important of which is exclusion, whereby those who do not belong to the 'group' are excluded from participating (Portes and Landholt 1996; Portes 1998; Fukuyama 1996; Taylor 2000). Analyses of social capital tend to be ahistorical by not allowing for the changes that could occur over time or the impact of historical events such as wars, economic misfortunes such Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) in the third world, natural disasters such as drought, famine, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in Africa, or social upheavals such as religious fundamentalism in the Muslim world. Such events provide opportunities for the formation of new networks and linkages which may advantage some people while disadvantaging others.

A key weakness in the social capital literature is the lack of engagement with gender and power relations, which contributes to the "gender-blindness" of much of the social capital literature even though civic engagement is highly gendered (Field 2003; Morrow 1999). Although some authors have commented on the relationship between social and political organization and on the impact of history and religion on social capital (Putnam 1993, Fukuyama 1996; Fukuyama 2001), little is said about how gender as an organizing principle of the social structure impacts on social capital (Putnam 1993; Grootaert and van Bastelaer 2001). Even Bourdieu (1986), who was concerned with how social capital

reproduces hierarchies, does not identify gender as a source of inequality until his later works such as his analysis of masculine domination (Bourdieu 2001).

This raises the question of why gender is not explored more in analyses of social interaction, which is clearly gendered in practice. Two possible explanations are that: (1) the concept of social capital is still being developed by scholars who are engaging with its shortcomings, such as its failure to recognize gender as an organizing principle or; (2) “gender-blindness” is the effect of a traditional approach to evidence which privileges male spheres of activities (Lowndes 2000; Lewis 2002; Field 2003). Arguably, a feminist commentator might find either position valid for two reasons. One reason is the bias of taking the male as the norm which comes from traditional ways of knowledge construction in the social sciences (Haraway 1988; Harding 1991; Reinharz 1992; Stanley 1990; Stanley and Wise 1993). The second is the modernization tendencies of development agencies and the rhetoric surrounding social capital which privilege limited roles for the state and more responsibilities for local institutions in the quest to build modern democracy globally, all of which are male domains that tend to see the world from male eyes (Molyneux 2002; Mayer and Rankin 2002).

Morrow (1999) examined the definitions of social capital by its chief protagonists and concludes that gender was not considered because the domains theorized are traditional male domains. For example, Putnam (1993) theorizes social capital as a key characteristic of communities rather than individuals. In Putnam’s formulation, social capital consists of networks, associations and institutions, which together constitute civic society, in the voluntary, state and personal spheres and the density of the networking between the three spheres. Putnam’s formulation does not engage with the issues of gender and power relations

and how they might influence the formation and sustenance of networks, associations and institutions

As a development policy tool, social capital theorizing has not adequately engaged with gender issues. Molyneux (2002) argues that “if we turn to the literature on social capital and consider the practices associated with it in the domain of policy, we see that gender is both present and absent in troubling ways.” The literature has devoted more energy to men’s social capital and spheres of activity without corresponding efforts given to women’s networks and their spheres of activity. . Molyneux (2002) argues that where women’s work and their potential contribution to the social fabric is acknowledged, there are a set of expectations about their role in the development process that are based on gender stereotypes, some of which have negative implications. These stereotypes are then used to inform development policy.

The first assumption is that women are naturally pre-disposed to serve their families or communities, either because of their caring nature or because their gender roles embed them more than men in family and neighborhood ties. By extension, women are seen as more predisposed to maintain social capital in these domains. Such assumptions are taken without questioning the terms on which women are incorporated into such roles, or the power relations involved in situating women in this way. Molyneux (2002) also argues that this can “all too easily make the responsibility for community projects, family health, environmental protection (women are seen as closer to nature (Glennon 1979) come to be seen as the preserve of women.”

The above stereotype helps explain why women’s participation in domains outside the domestic sphere is often viewed negatively. For example, women’s employment in the

western world such as the United States of America is often portrayed as negative for both community cohesion and their individual children (Morrow 1999). Social capital theorists such as Coleman and Putnam have proposed that women's entry into paid work corrodes social capital. Putnam sees the decline in social capital to be caused by a decline in family and kinship, which he blames on market-based child care (Molyneux 2002). Similarly, Coleman's conception of social capital, which focuses on relations between and among families and communities, identifies working mothers and lone parenthood as two of the main causes of declining social capital and loss of community cohesion (Morrow 1999). These authors are joined by the conservative church in Latin America in denouncing the entry of women into waged labor and blaming their entry for a host of societal ills.

Lowndes (2000) argues that this perspective devalues women's work and their spheres of activities such as relationships forged in the work place, child care centers and school runs which are important sources of social capital.

Lowndes (2000) also questions why women's networks and spheres of activity, especially those concerning highly gendered roles such as child care, are overlooked in analyses of social capital. She suggests that this can be explained by the public/private divide in the consideration of politics in general and citizenship in particular. Because these activities are associated with women's gender roles, they "are all conceived as outside the political world of citizenship and largely irrelevant to it" (Lowndes 2000), thus explaining why they are not considered in such high sounding formulations as 'civic engagement.' This calls attention to two things. First is the invisibility of women's work and spheres of activity in creating or sustaining social networks (Morrow 1999) and by extension, social capital. Second, is the sex role stereotype, which identifies a woman's place to be within the home

and theorizes women within the domestic sphere. This is contrary to the multitude of tasks women perform (Boserup 1970; Jiggins et al. 2000) as well as the social networks they generate and sustain (Molyneux 2002). Indeed, many microfinance programs have been built upon women's social networks.

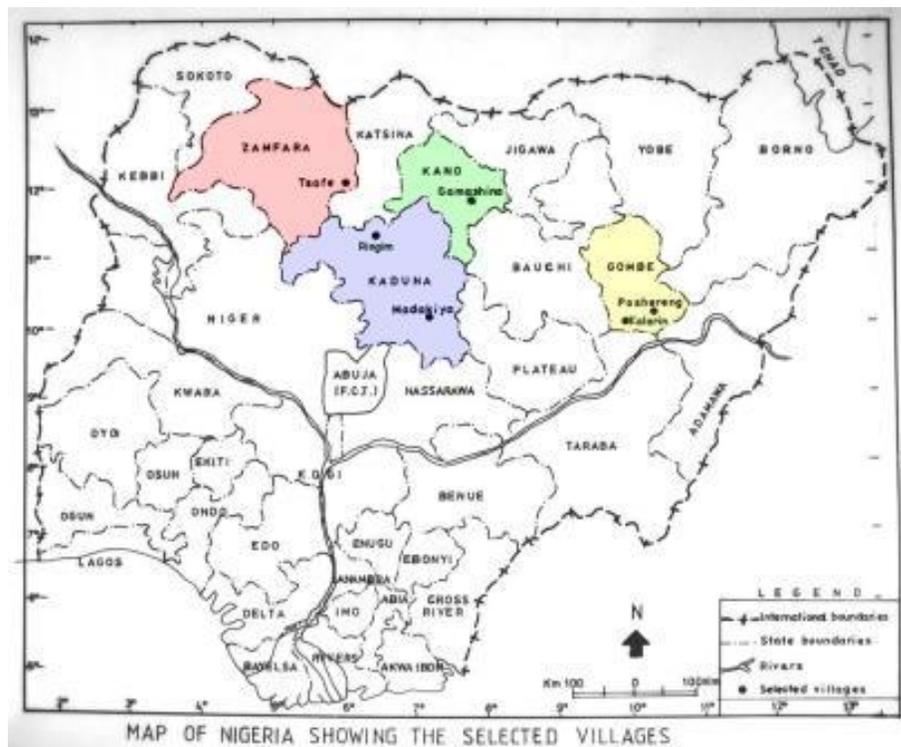
Studies on women in northern Nigeria tend to mirror the public/private divide by focusing on women's lives in terms of social cultural practices such as marriage (Perchonock 1985), seclusion, religion, and ideology (Robson 2000; Pittin 2002; Coles and Mark 1991; Callaway 1987). When studies do examine women's productive roles, such as their access to agricultural extension services (Abdullahi 1992; Chale 1990; Maigida 2000), they tend to gloss over how gender relations affect women's access to resources. Similarly, research which informs rural development initiatives largely focuses on gathering data about the tasks women perform, such as in agricultural production (Atala and Tarfa 1991; Maigida 1993), and providing services to match these tasks, such as improved technology for women (Kaul 1993a; Kaul 1993b), without questioning the gender relations which determine the tasks women perform and how technology might place more burdens on women by increasing their workload. The following section describes the broad gender roles and key institutions in the study villages.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREAS

Six villages in northern Nigeria were selected for this study. The villages selected are Gamashina in the north, Ringim and Madakiya in the north central, Tsafe in the northwest and Poshereng and Kalarin in the north east. The villages were selected to reflect the diverse character of northern Nigeria, in terms of major sub-groupings of geographical location and

religion. The focus of this research is not to make generalizations about women's participation in collective action, but to identify the types of collective action men and women participate in. Bringing to light the different experiences of women and men in participating in collective action in different locations within northern Nigeria contributes to the argument that social capital theorists tend to over-generalize findings (Portes 1998), ignore issues of power and gender (Mayer and Rankin 2002) and fail to take into account how social contexts might impact on social capital, especially in African contexts (Lewis 2002). Brief descriptions of the study villages are given below.

Figure 1--Map of Nigeria showing study villages



Gamashina

Gamashina is located in Kano state in northern Nigeria. The people of Gamashina are Maguzawa, a Hausa speaking people who have resisted the Jihadists and conversion to Islam.

They have retained their traditional religion and culture of *bori*² but many of them have converted to Christianity. Community members said that the village was established by hunters who ran away from warring tribes in Bauchi and Jihadists from Sokoto.³ Farming is the main occupation of men and women in this village. Men own land and give women plots to cultivate. Women can own land if they buy, inherit or are given it by their husbands. However, women lose the right to farm land given to them by their husbands upon divorce.

There is no constituted village government in Gamashina. The Maguzawa are loosely united under the tribal chief who lives in another village. This chief is in charge of markets and the sale of beer. The leaders of the community are the elders, church leaders, association leaders and the *Sarkin noma*.⁴

Community development initiatives are carried out through community based associations or the church. There are about 11 community associations in Gamashina. These are divided into trade associations which cater to the interests of trades people, and the community development associations which are based in the church. Women do not participate in the trade associations, whereas men as well as women participate in the church based associations.

² The main traditional religion is *bori* which is the cult of possession trance, which was practiced by Hausas before the coming of Islam to northern Nigeria. For more discussion of *bori* among Hausas of northern Nigeria see Besmer (1983).

³ The Maguzawa people adhered to their traditional beliefs and practices and became more and more isolated to remote areas of Hausaland. For a more detailed consideration of Maguzawa people see Furniss (1996).

⁴ The *sarkin noma* is the chief farmer. According to community members interviewed in Gamashina, the title is given to the farmer with the biggest harvest each year. In the Hausa emirate system the *sarkin noma* is one of the lesser chiefs and the title is hereditary (Smith 1961).

Ringim

Ringim is located in Giwa local government area of Kaduna state in north central Nigeria. The main occupation of men is farming. Men cultivate upland farms during the rainy season. Crops grown on upland farms are sorghum, maize, cowpea, soya beans, yams, and potatoes. The river banks are cultivated during the dry season. Crops cultivated are rice and vegetables. Some fishing also takes place on a small scale. Men also engage in hunting during the dry season. Community members keep small animals. Men keep work bulls and small ruminants like goats and sheep and women keep chicken and goats. A few men in the village are petty traders.

Women participate in farming as helpers or hired labor. Women are hired as farm labor to do planting and harvesting, collecting the harvest in one place on the farms as well as carrying some of it home. However, only young girls, old women and immigrant women are involved. Other women are restricted to threshing, de-husking and other food processing tasks at home.

Community members identified community institutions as the traditional village authority and voluntary associations. The village authority is made up of the ward head and his advisers. The ward head is responsible for tax collection, peace keeping and general welfare of community members on behalf of the village head. Like Tsafe, the village traditional authority is part of the Zaria emirate, which was a feudal system, and has retained some of its autocratic features. The emirate system is less participatory than the clan system in Madakiya and Poshereng and as a result, community members have less access to decisionmaking, and women are twice removed from village decisions.

Group participants said participation in community associations is new to them as they started participating in community associations only recently. Presently, village associations are mainly involved in community development and village security. Participants said that the most important institutions in meeting their needs are the voluntary associations in the village. There are about 10 voluntary associations in Ringim and only men are members. Women are restricted to their *adashe*⁵ and *biki*⁶ relationships.

Madakiya

Madakiya is located in Kaduna state in the north central region. The village is one of a cluster of six villages that make up the Bajju chiefdom. Community members said the other villages in the cluster were established by Madakiya farmers as farm camps, which grew into villages. Community members said the people of Madakiya are divided into seven clans or lineages that founded the village.

Community members identified three types of institutions in Madakiya, namely the village council, the local government and community associations. The village council consists of the district head, or *Hakimi*, as paramount chief, the village head, the *Gora*, the ward heads and clan heads. The next in authority to the *Hakimi* is the village head of Madakiya which is made up of a cluster of wards, each headed by a *Gora*. The *Hakimi* is assisted by the village head and *Gora* from each cluster. A village head is elected from among sons of the old village head by a council of ministers called *Gora*. *Gora* is the

⁵ *Adashe* (Hausa): A system of financial cooperation amongst friends (Bargery 1934). *Adashe* is now also widely practiced between work colleagues, trading partners and neighbors. *Adashe* is savings people make by contributing money to a common pot which participants take turns to draw from. Woolcock (1998) describes it as a spontaneous “‘bottom – up’ group formation, initiated and sustained by members themselves in response to their isolation from orthodox commercial banks.”

⁶ *Biki* (Hausa): Any gift or contribution of food, clothing to a friend who is celebrating a special occasion, which will be returned when an occasion arises (Bargery 1934).

council of ministers working with the village head. Each ward of Madakiya has a *Gora*, appointed from the clans by the village head. The *Gora* is responsible for tax collection and organizing community activities like sanitation. Women cannot be *Gora* but are assigned *Gora* responsibilities in charge of women's affairs. The women clan leaders have access to the *Gora* council, at their request, or they can be summoned to give account of their leadership by the village council.

Community associations in the village were classified as trade, church, community development and self help associations. The *Batadon* is a village development association under which all village clans organize. It is the biggest village association, which is stratified into the big village meeting, clan groups, and households.

Each clan functions as an association, with a constitution and elections. Women are active members of the associations at each level. Women participate in the association through the women's wing. At the household level, women attend the household meetings and have a say in decisionmaking. The leaders of the women's wing and the men's wing are delegates to the meeting of the clan, where the delegates to the larger *Batadon* are elected. Women participate at all the levels of clan hierarchy. Their main functions are to monitor the discipline of children and convey the concerns of women from the households to the clan.

Poshereng

Poshereng is located in Kaltungo local government area of Gombe state in north eastern Nigeria. It is one of the 10 wards of the Kaltungo chiefdom. The people of Poshereng are predominantly farmers. Men are farmers, builders, brick layers, carpenters, petty traders, mechanics, school teachers, health workers and local government administrators. Women

too are farmers, petty traders, teachers, health workers, food sellers, beer brewers, potters and mat weavers. In addition, they rear small animals like goats, pigs and chicken.

Community members identified institutions in their community as the traditional authority, the local government and community associations. The traditional institutions include the traditional village government and the clan system. The clan system comprises the clan head and household heads who are responsible for the welfare of people of their clans and households. Household heads of the clan elect their clan leaders. Women do not participate directly in village government but are represented in their clans by women leaders. The village government comprises the emir, as the paramount chief, the village head and ward heads. The government appoints the village head while the community members choose their ward heads. The local government is responsible for the administration of Poshereng on behalf of the state government. The local government is responsible for the provision of health care, education, and general welfare for community members.⁷ Posehereng is represented at the local government headquarters in Kaltungo by a councilor elected by the people.⁸ Women participate in local government as administrators, clerks, teachers and nurses. They are also elected into leadership positions.

The other institutions in Poshereng are the voluntary associations that carry out community development activities in the village. Some of the associations are trade associations, such as the Union of Road Transport Workers and the Water Sellers Association. Some are clan associations that protect the interests of clan members such as the Tulduwale,

⁷ There has been deterioration of government services since the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Policy in the early 1980s, to the extent that the government is unable to provide essential services to the people. Village associations are assuming the responsibilities of the government in the maintenance of roads, health care and education in Madakiya, Poshereng, Kalarin and Tsafe. The community provides most of the healthcare, education and other services through their own efforts.

⁸ Women as well as men are eligible to vote and be voted for as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution. However, societal norms might impinge on such rights and women could be excluded from the process.

Ladur, Oklong, and Todi clan associations, while others are community development associations such as Poshereng Multipurpose Cooperative Society and Poshereng Development Association. Men as well as women participate in voluntary associations.

Kalarin

Kalarin is located in Gombe state of north eastern Nigeria. Community members said they are predominantly Muslim. Their main means of livelihood is farming, and men as well as women engage in farming. Women own land under Islamic law, and some do cultivate their land but many said that they pay men to do the farming for them because of the restrictions of seclusion. Married women are discouraged from going to the farms, but older women who have reached menopause go to the farm. Men as well as women work for the local government as administrators, teachers and health workers. Men and women engage in trade and sell in the market.

Community members identified three kinds of institutions in their village. These are traditional institutions, the local government and community associations. The traditional institution is made up of the emir and his council of chiefs. The traditional village government runs side by side with the clan system and the western type local government. Through the clans, the people have representation in government, and women are represented by their leaders. However, women do not participate in the traditional village government.

Men as well as women participate in voluntary associations in Kalarin. Men participate in community development associations as members while women participate by proxy by contributing money or food to community development activities through their

husbands or their own associations. Women participate in women only associations in the Islamiyya schools,⁹ their clan associations or their *adashe* groups.

Tsafe

Tsafe is located in Zamfara state of north western Nigeria. The main occupations of Tsafe are farming and trade. While men trade mostly in the market or shops outside the home, women conduct their trade from their homes. Women in seclusion engage in hairdressing, petty trading and selling cooked food from their homes.¹⁰ Older women trade at the market, the motor park or the road side. Fulani women sell soured milk, millet pudding and butter at the village square, the motor park and the market. Men interviewed said their main articles of trade are cows, goats, sheep, grains, vegetables, groundnut oil and hides and skins which are taken to markets in southern parts of Nigeria. Tsafe traders buy provisions, clothing and furniture from Zaria and Kano, and palm oil, bananas, oranges, yams, and kolanuts from southern and western Nigeria.

Farmers practice rain fed and irrigated farming. Crops cultivated through irrigated farming are mostly fruits and vegetables. Cereals and pulses like maize, millet, cotton,

⁹ Islamiyya are schools run for the purpose of imparting Islamic education to children by the Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI). They were later modified to also cater to the needs of adults who did not receive Islamic education as children. The curriculum of the Islamiyya schools include reading the Quran and its commentaries, Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence and other subjects deemed necessary by the JNI. The curriculum was expanded after the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE), supported by the government and UNICEF in 1973, to include some components of the formal primary school curriculum, such as English language and arithmetic. Women have agitated and won support to run their Islamiyya schools in Tsafe, Kalarin and other communities in rural and urban parts of northern Nigeria. Presently, the Islamiyya schools for women provide a curriculum of the Quran, Hadith, Tajwid, English, arithmetic, health science and home economics. For fuller discussion of women's education in northern Nigeria, see Coles and Mack (1991).

¹⁰ Some women who observe seclusion in northern Nigeria have become successful traders and own property (Pittin 2002).

cowpea and groundnuts are the main crops cultivated through rain fed farming. The main crop farmers cultivate is sorghum, which accounts for about 40 percent of total crops grown.

Although women could own land through inheritance, they do not engage in farming because they are required to be in seclusion in accordance with religious injunctions.

However, they can cultivate land by proxy by paying someone else to cultivate their farms for them. Alternatively, such farmlands are left in the care of brothers or other male relations to cultivate. Older women and immigrant women from *Arewa*¹¹ can work as hired labor to do farm activities like planting and picking cotton, peppers and cowpea, but they do not cultivate farms of their own.

Community members identified three kinds of institutions in Tsafe, which are the traditional village government, the local government authority and voluntary associations. The traditional government consists of the emir and his council. The local government is responsible for administration on behalf of the state government. The local government provides social services, security, employment, and collects taxes. Women do not participate in either the village or local government because according to community members, their law requires women to be at home and not participate in community politics. At present, there are 20 community based associations in Tsafe doing community development work. Members said community based associations complement government services by providing drinking water, sanitation, culverts construction and maintenance of schools for the community. Women do not participate directly in the associations identified but they contribute money or food whenever a community development activity such as culvert construction is taking place. However, women participate in their own associations in the Islamiyya schools.

¹¹Immigrant Tuareg women from Niger republic who sell soured milk and provide casual labor in some towns of north western Nigeria.

METHODS

Participation in social groups and associations is a common measure of social capital. Putnam (1993) ranked social capital in Italian regions according to a measure of density of membership in formal organizations. Authors have questioned the use of membership in formal organizations as a measure of social capital and by extension, collective action. For example, Krishna and Shrader (2000) noted that there exists uncertainty over which networks constitute social capital. Should research only focus on formal networks such as formally organized groups, or should informal organizations also be considered? Krishna (2001) found density of formal organizations to be a particularly inappropriate indicator of social capital in villages in Rajasthan, India because formal organizations there do not provide a reliable indication of voluntarism and cooperation among villagers. A locally relevant scale for measuring social capital was devised, which relied upon assessing participation in informal networks, as several such networks exist and villagers participate in such networks regularly. Other authors (Petro (2001); Krishna (2001); Krishna and Uphoff (1999); Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2001); and Svendsen and Svendsen (2000)) found density of membership in formal organizations as the only measure of social capital to be inadequate and adopted supplementary measures.

Similarly, this study adopts the method of measuring membership in formal organizations, supplemented by measuring membership in informal organizations and acts of cooperation, solidarity and reciprocity, such as joining others to solve common problems by community members, as more relevant measures of participation in collective action. This method was adopted because the use of density of membership in formal organizations as the only measure of social capital was found to be inadequate in the villages, where few people

are members of formal organizations and the majority, especially the poor and women, tend to participate in non formal networks and associations for support. Thus, focusing only on formal organizations holds the risk of rendering women's networks invisible as they tend to rely more on informal ties for support (Hibbit,, Jones and Meegan 2000; Lowndes 2000; Moore 1990).

It is argued that institutions do not have an ontological status apart from the human activity that produces them (Krishna 2001). Varying forms of human activity develop to deal with different needs and compulsions of life in different ecological and cultural settings. Networks, roles, rules, procedures, precedents, norms, values, attitudes and beliefs are different among people who have different patterns of life. As Lewis (2002) and Mayer and Rankin (2002) argue, measures of social capital that are suitable for one set of cultures can be irrelevant for others. As a case in point, the use of 'trust' as an indicator of social capital and collective action was found to be unsuitable among the Hausas and Fulani who have the culture of *Kunya*,¹² which encourages shyness and modesty and hinders community members from saying they do not trust their neighbors when directly questioned.

Data were generated using an adaptation of the Social Capital Assessment Tool (SCAT), developed in 1999 by Krishna and Shradder for the World Bank. The SCAT components adopted were developed after study of research instruments developed by different researchers and used in over 25 studies conducted in 15 countries worldwide (Krishna and Shradder 2000). In addition, elements of the instrument designed at the Saguaro seminar at Harvard University in 1999/2000, for a social capital community benchmark survey about 'how Americans are connected to each other' were also adapted and used.

¹² *Kunya(Hausa)*:Shame, shyness, modesty, appropriate behavior (Bargery 1934; Skinner 1996).

Interviews were conducted with community members individually and in groups in order to learn about community characteristics and establish the nature of participation in community groups and associations. The individual interview checklist included questions on personal characteristics, personal connections, exclusion, conflict resolution, solidarity, cooperation and reciprocity. Group interviews were used to complement individual interviews on issues of networks of mutual support, cooperation, exclusion, solidarity and reciprocity. This tool was used as a means of adding insight into the nature of social organization and collective action in the communities.

Krishna and Shradder (1999) recommend that between three and six associations per community be profiled, but given timing constraints eleven associations in total were profiled for this study. The function of the organizational profile is to bring out the relationships and networks that exist among informal and formal community organizations, as well as assess the characteristics that may hinder or promote the building of social capital in a community. The organizations profiled were those identified by community members as key organizations during the individual and group interviews. The organizational profile was conducted by means of interviews with leaders and members. Both a men's and a women's association were profiled from each village, with the exception of Ringim, where only a men's association, the *Miyetti- Allah*, was functioning at the time of the study, and where there are no women's associations except *biki* and *adashe* relationships that only function during the of harvesting of farm produce or ceremonies and are therefore *ad hoc* and could not be profiled.

FINDINGS

The nature of collective action in all the villages is divided into two categories; voluntary work for community development conducted through community based associations and self help cooperation through friendship groups and *gayya*,¹³ as well as clan groups. Differences in patterns of participation in collective action were observed between men and women, between women, and between villages.

Differences between men and women

The nature of men's participation in collective action differs from women's participation in terms of the types of activities they engage in. Men tend to be more concerned with community development, security or income generating activities. Two men's associations, the *Garewa Matasa* club in Tsafe and the *Miyetti Allah* association in Ringim, are taken as examples. The *Garewa Matasa* club was established about 30 years ago with community development as its purpose. Presently, the association engages in self help, community development and helping young people find jobs or trade. The association carries out community development projects including sanitation, building public toilets and maintenance of public property such as graveyards, mosques, roads, culverts and schools.

The *Garewa Matasa* club is an umbrella organization to other community development associations in Tsafe. Members said that their association used to have strong links with community development associations in neighboring states such as Kano, Kaduna

¹³ *Gayya*(Hausa): Cooperative work (Bargery 1934) or communal labor (Skinner 1996) done for the community or when several people cooperate to assist an individual member of the community do a piece of work such as building a hut or clearing a field.

and Katsina. Members and leaders used to pay working visits to other associations in order to learn about how other associations conduct their affairs and participate in competitive games and musical festivals. Some of these visits, especially the ones that involve games and musical festivals, were stopped when *Shariah*¹⁴ was adopted as the state legal system because such meetings were seen as encouraging social interaction between men and women who are not related by blood.¹⁵ The Garewa Matasa association has a good working relationship with the local government. Leaders said that they invite the government to contribute material or technical expertise to its projects. Presently, the association is working with the local government on the malaria eradication project.

Leaders of the association interviewed said that the association is open to everyone in the community, except for women. The association did have male and female members until the adoption of *Shariah*, when women members were expelled. When women were members, they used to have the responsibility of teaching other women in the community about hygiene, nutrition and childcare.

The *Miyetti Allah* association was started as a voluntary association in order to protect the interests of Fulani herders in both local and regional affairs. It is a nationwide association with the national branch in Abuja, the state branch in Kaduna, the local government branch in Giwa, the district branch in Karau and the local branch in Ringim. The Ringim branch was started by the local government branch. The association engages in peace keeping between communities. Members said that their association aims is to maintain peace between farmers

¹⁴ Islamic legal system.

¹⁵ Prior to the adoption of *Shariah*, 'independent women' participated in community based associations alongside men. Such women are seen as deviants by the society because they are not in the socially acceptable relationships of marriage, hence the derogatory term, 'independent women' is used to refer to them. With the adoption of the *shariah*, in some states of northern Nigeria, such women were expelled from community based associations. However, politicians continue use them to mobilize women in seclusion to come out to vote during elections.

and Fulani herdsmen. Also, the association hopes to integrate Fulani people into local governance by getting representation in the government at all levels.

Presently, the association participates in providing security to the community. It works with vigilante groups in the community and neighboring villages to patrol the forests and the villages in the area in order to safeguard the animals and people in the villages from thieves and cattle rustlers. Other activities include securing veterinary services for the animals and getting rights of passage through the cattle trails when they migrate to greener pastures during the dry season and rights to graze and water the cattle in designated areas.

Members of *Miyetti Allah* are Fulani men who live in the locality. Hausa men can also join the association. Leaders of the association said that only people with good character could join. The association does not accept people who are dishonest or of shady character. This is because the group's activities involve a lot of security work. Members of *Miyetti Allah* also join other associations in the village like the vigilante association and farmers association. Members said their association has a strong relationship with the vigilante and farmers associations because their activities overlap. They give each other help and often work in collaboration with each other on security duties.

Women engage in different spheres of activities. They tend to cooperate for mutual support for small-scale savings, house and farm work, childcare, petty trading and education in communities where women have limited access to formal education. The activities of two women's associations, FOMWAN in Kalarin and the Women's Choir in Gamashina, are presented as two examples.

FOMWAN association in Kalarin was started by two educated women in order to provide basic religious education to women who did not have the opportunity to be educated

as children, so that they could acquire a better understanding of their rights and obligations in day-to-day life. Leaders of the association said they used the opportunity of Islamic revival in northern Nigeria to press for women's education and designed a syllabus that includes elements of western adult education. The leaders said that they lobbied community leaders for land to build their school and the local government to provide teachers. Land was provided by the *emir*, and two additional houses which were converted into classrooms and childcare crèches were donated by other community leaders.

Presently, the association has adult education classes for women, a primary school and a nursery school. The adult education syllabus includes branches of Islamic knowledge (*Quran, Hadith, Fiq, Sira, Tajwid*), English, math, health education and social studies. Skills like knitting, sewing, and soap making are also taught. Members explained that they use the association to engage in income generating activities such as petty trading between members. They cooperate to save money through *adashe* savings and also exchange labor for housework and childcare.

Members said their association has good relationships with other community associations. The association collaborates with Jama'atu Izalatul Bid'a Wa Ikamatus Sunnah (JIBWIS) and has collaborated with most organizations involved with community development. Members of FOMWAN attend meetings of their association in the village and also participate in the activities of other associations in the village and beyond. For example, they collaborate with JIBWIS to run both a school for women and a crèche for women attending school, and they participate in the activities of Kalarin Youth Congress. FOMWAN has also contributed financially to community development activities, such as the construction of a maternity hospital and village drainage, by imposing taxes on members.

Members have also collaborated with the Women's Economic Advancement Program of the Federal government (WRAPA) on HIV/AIDS campaigns.

The Women's Choir in Gamashina is a church based organization that began as a church choir. Members started helping each other on the farm and with food processing like dehusking and milling. The association was modified to include rotational farm work and help with housework and childcare for members. Leaders are elected every two years on the basis of their perceived ability to work with other people and their hard work on the farm. Presently, leaders of the association are the *uwar zumunta* (leader of association), the choir mistress, the secretary and the treasurer.

The leader of the association said the association has regular meetings and a scheme of work that members follow. The association also has rules and regulations that the secretary reads to new members when they join. Decisions are taken jointly by members after consultation. Members said that they vote on issues that they do not all agree on. The treasurer and the leader of the association are responsible for the finances of the association. Money for the association is generated by members selling their farm labor to community members. Some of the money generated is used to purchase grains during harvest and the rest is shared by the group's members. The grains are stored and sold to members at cheap rates during scarcity and the money is saved for future use.

In the case studies presented, men's associations engage in construction and repairs of community structures, while women's associations engage in helping other women with domestic work and costs for ceremonies such as *biki*, teaching other women how to read and write and visiting them. Men's activities are carried out in the public sphere while women's activities are conducted primarily in the home and in such socially approved spaces as the

Islamiyya schools. This difference implies that men are engaged with the maintenance of their control over the public sphere and women are engaged in traditional women's roles of caring in the domestic sphere.

In all of the villages visited, women are responsible for housework, including cooking, cleaning, taking care of young children and the elderly, as well as helping out on the farms or processing farm produce at home. Such duties keep women home bound, leaving them with less time to engage in associational activity. Men, on the other hand, are expected to provide the family with food and other needs, which are theoretically obtained outside the home. Also, men are expected to participate in public affairs such as trading in the village markets, village square and visiting the ward and village heads to show allegiance or to discuss community matters. Thus, men's patterns of collective action will tend to be instrumental in terms of being engaged in activities that involve community decision making and adding to resources they already own. Women will tend to be more engaged in nurturing actions or maintenance of resources they already own (Lin 2001a) which correspond to their gender roles. However, in reality, it is recognized that women play larger and significant roles in providing food for the family than is recognized by the society, as has been argued by Imam (1993), Callaway and Creevey (1994) and Pittin (2002).

Differences between women

Differences in patterns of participation in collective activities were observed between women depending on the socio-cultural characteristics of the villages. In this light, patterns of participation take different forms in Muslim and Christian communities as well as in communities with differing clan systems. Women in Muslim communities tend to engage in collective action for mutual support in informal structures of *biki* and *adashe* relationships.

These relationships, which were found in Ringim, Tsafe and Kalarin, are set up to address a particular pressing problem, such as help with childcare and housework. Other avenues for collective action were the formal associations with written constitutions and elected leaders such as the Islamiyya based groups found in Kalarin and Tsafe.

Women in Muslim communities such as Tsafe and Ringim, and to a certain extent Kalarin, are discouraged from participating in village development activities because of seclusion and tend to be restricted to Islamiyya associations because societal norms restrict women's participation to women-only associations. Women in such communities use Islamiyya schools to engage in other forms of support activities such as the ubiquitous *adashe* and *biki* groups and petty trading. *Adashe* group participants interviewed said that they contribute a fixed amount of money, grains or labor at specified intervals to one member of the group on a rotational basis, until every member of the group has a take from the pot. Some of the *adashe* groups are formal with a constitution and elected leaders and some are informal. Members of the informal groups interviewed said that they do not have formal group meetings or a constitution and participation is guided by unwritten rules and based on trust and reciprocity.

Unlike *adashe*, *biki* is not a group but a set of relationships women have with other women in order to provide assistance towards the costs of ceremonial activities like weddings and child naming ceremonies. Those who are in *biki* relationships with other women said the relationship works on the basis of reciprocity, where woman A gives woman B a gift of £1 during a ceremonial activity like a wedding or childbirth. Woman B is expected to return the gift of £1 with a small mark-up to woman A at another time in the future when A is celebrating something. This exchange of gifts goes on for a long time, each

time increasing in value until the parties involved decide to put an end to it. A woman can have several *biki* partners in the community depending on her age and social status. *Biki* is a part of Hausa culture and is practiced more in Tsafe, Ringim and Gamashina. Like *adashe*, *biki* relationships are based on reciprocity and trust. A possible explanation as to why such relationships continue to function with an apparent lack of structure is that such structures predate modern banking (Woolcock 2001). In addition, they provide reliable safety nets and it is thus in the interest of all members to cooperate since rent seeking behavior carries social stigma.

A departure from strict norms of seclusion which limit women's access to education and jobs was observed in Kalarin, a predominantly Muslim community. Women participate in the public arena and are employed by the local government as teachers, nurses, accountants and secretaries because they have acquired some education and therefore are qualified to take up paid employment. Women in Kalarin perceive the adoption of *Shariah* as a positive development because it allows them access to employment and income:

“Women have the same access as men. About 10 years ago, women did not take government jobs because they were not qualified and were restricted by *purdah*. This has changed with the creation of Islamiyya schools. Women have realized that their religion does not restrict them from taking paid employment. They now go to school, work in government ministries in the local authority. There is some relaxation about *purdah* and more women are freed to seek a livelihood” (Group discussion with women, Kalarin 06/07/02).

Women in Kalarin participate in Islamiyya groups, clan groups, work-based *adashe* groups and community development associations such as *Kalpodwale*, a women's association concerned with making peace between conflicting parties in the community. Arguably,

women in Kalarin are able to participate in their communities because the social system allows broad based participation of community members.¹⁶

The pattern observed in Kalarin could also be explained by the long presence of Christian missionaries in Kaltungo. People of Kaltungo take pride in being the most educated in the district. Missionary activity in the area was started by the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), now the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), in 1917. Opportunity to acquire some education enabled men as well as women to be eligible for employment and earn better incomes than those who had less access to education. Thus, education has raised the social class of women as well as men in Kalarin and may contribute to women's participation in collective action.

Women in Kalarin face fewer restrictions of seclusion because they are not Hausas and thus are not subject to Hausa norms of appropriate female behavior, such as *kunya*,¹⁷ which keep women subservient to men and elders within the household. These norms are often transcended to the larger community. The clan system allows some roles for women's participation in the community even though such participation is gendered. Many women in Kalarin work outside of the home in hospitals, schools, and the local government secretariat, although they are expected to wear the *hijab* and express modest behavior in public.

¹⁶ There is an apparent tension and struggle of dominance between Tangale and Islamic cultures in Kalarin. On the one hand, the people identify with their culture and aspects of the culture such as divisions into clans that regulate their lives. The role of women within the clan structure allows them some participation in terms of responsibility for settlement of disputes between women as well as men. On the other hand, they also want to identify with their acquired religion as well as its associated practices. On the question of women, Islamic teaching has been interpreted as saying that women are to be segregated and cared for within the household by men so that they can be protected. However, the people seem to accommodate Islamic culture within their Tangale culture by allowing women to leave the home to work if wearing appropriate body covering, and restricting them from going to the market.

¹⁷ Shame, shyness, modesty, appropriate behavior (Bargery 1934; Skinner 1996)

The women in Tsafe live totally different social realities. Historically, the Hausa society is feudal (Perchonock 1985; Hill 1982; Callaway and Creevey 1994; Coles and Mack 1991; Trimmingham 1959) and the coming of Islam consolidated a gender ideology where women were ascribed roles outside of the public domain and men assumed their decisionmaking roles (Callaway and Creevy 1994; Trimmingham 1959). These changes have led to less participation of women in the public space. Thus, women in Tsafe and Ringim participate less in community groups and institutions because societal norms do not support such participation. Alternatively, women in these villages participate in *biki* and *adashe* activities without restrictions because the groups are exclusively female and the norms of group participation do not require meetings. Agreements of association are verbal and based on trust. Most importantly, the norms of *adashe* groups do not contravene religious/cultural norms in Tsafe and Ringim communities.

Differences between villages

Differences in patterns of collective action were also found between villages. Some of the findings reflect the socio-cultural characteristics of particular sub-groups. The differences are observed between Muslim and Christian villages as well as between villages with clan system and those without. People participate more in collective action in clan-based communities than in communities which are not clan based. This is because the clan structure allows the broad based participation of people in decision making in their communities through representation. For example, men as well as women participate in collective action in Madakiya, Poshereng and Kalarin, all of which are structured according to clans where people are represented in village government. Madakiya and Kalarin communities are presented as examples.

Madakiya is made up of 13 lineages which make up the Batadon community. Community members are divided into seven founding clans of the village. Community leaders and members said that the population of Madakiya is about 8,000. This is made up of about 1,000 households that are divided into groups of 50 – 100 households as units of administration. The people of Madakiya regard themselves as descended from the same ancestor. Also, the majority of people in Madakiya are Christian. Because of their common ancestry and shared religion, there is very strong bonding through the clans and the church. Social interaction is very dense as there are a lot of inter-relationships between families, households, clans, the Batadon and church associations.

All of the clans are run as associations with elected leaders, and all the clans together make up the Batadon under which all village clans organize. It is the biggest village association, which is stratified into the big village meeting, clan groups, and households. Community members said each level of Batadon functions as an association, with a constitution and elections. Women are active members of the associations at each level. Women participate in the association through the women's wing. At the household level, women attend the household meetings and have a say in decisionmaking. The leaders of the women's wing and the men's wing are delegates to the meeting of the clan, where the delegates to the larger Batadon are elected. Women participate at all the levels of clan hierarchy. Their main functions are to check discipline of children and project the concerns of women from the household to the clan.

People become leaders in Kalarin through elections in the traditional system as well as the modern system of governance. People are nominated for election on the basis of their character. For example, the emir is elected by village, ward, clan heads and ministers. The

person elected is normally from those eligible for the post from the ruling family. Also, ward heads and village heads are elected in the same way as the emir. Other people become leaders in the community because of their demonstrated good characters like honesty, humility and generosity. Men as well as women are informal leaders in the community. Community members said age, educational achievements, and wealth of an individual in addition to good character gives a person influence in community affairs. Women can become both formal and informal leaders.

Women participate in community governance through their clans in Madakiya and Kalarin. Women leaders use their clans to project the concerns of women to the traditional authority and the local government. Women are thus able to participate in village decisions through their clans, households, wards, associations, organizations, schools, and places of work. However, men make the major decisions (e.g. concerning the collection of taxes or the settlement of land disputes) in the village and women are not normally invited to such decisionmaking meetings.

Thus, even within such seemingly egalitarian social arrangements, women are still relegated to non-decisionmaking roles in collective activities. For example, in communities such as in Kalarin and Madakiya where women participate alongside men, they tend to be restricted to traditional women's roles of cooking and fetching water and sand during village development activities, and do not make decisions. This perpetuates women's subordinate social position and limits women's abilities to negotiate changes to their positions since they do not participate in making decisions.

Patterns observed also suggest that people tend to participate less in collective action in communities with feudal type systems of village government. In the communities with

feudal type social arrangements, such as Tsafe and Ringim, women as well as men participate less in community associations where group participation is a recent innovation. For example, men interviewed in Ringim said that they started participating in community associations in the village when the government initiated Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) in 1992, which encouraged the formation of community groups and associations as part of the government's rural development policy. Community groups and associations are not part of Hausa social organization. Those found in Ringim are ad hoc groups set up to confront certain problems. Examples are *gayya*, amongst men, which is convened to deal with immediate problems such as road repairs, harvesting farm produce and building huts and barns. Amongst women, *gayya* is convened to supply domestic labor such as for making the floor of the hut or room (*dabe*), room decoration (*jere*) or other needs as they arise.¹⁸ Formal associational activity is not part of the social organization of *gayya*. The practice of formal associational activity was adopted through social interactions with people from other places who have hometown associations. In addition, contact with the west exposed people to western forms of political participation. Thus, trade unionism and trade associations, as well as promotions by the government such as MAMSER, became the privilege of men, because of their public character.

Although Islamic teachings stress the importance of the *umma* (community), the hierarchical nature of government and politics and traces of feudalism in Hausa communities (Hill 1982) makes cooperation difficult between privileged and ordinary (*talakawa*) members of the community outside the space of religion. Community development activities under the

¹⁸ *Dabe* and *jere* are social events for women, when a woman invites her friends and relations from near and far to come and help her to redecorate her hut. This is usually accompanied by merriment, which involves cooking and singing to rhythms beaten on the calabash (*kwarya*).

auspices of religion are mostly done for charity such as graveyard maintenance and the giving of alms to the needy. Such activities tend to be unstructured, highly gendered and dominated by men. For example, only men get together to maintain the community graveyards in Tsafe and Kalarin because the internment part of funerals is a man's domain and no women are allowed. With the establishment of *Shariah* as state law, community members now engage in improving Islamiyya schools in Tsafe and Kalarin. This development is important for women because they are now actors in an arena from which they were hitherto excluded.

Women's associations make use of other associations

Participation in collective action takes place in associations both formal and informal. Bigger and more powerful associations tend to have *reno* (nursing) relationships with smaller, resource-weak associations in the community and in neighboring communities. This is a relationship whereby the more powerful associations take the smaller associations under their wings and nurture them through the training of leaders and the sharing of facilities until the smaller associations are strong enough to stand on their own feet.

Women's associations tend to make use of *reno* relationships in order to participate in collective action. Two women's associations which use the structures of more powerful community associations to function are given as examples. The Women's Da'awa group in Tsafe was initiated by a few women in Tsafe in order to give other women in the community the opportunity to receive an education. The leader of the association described the purpose of the association as eliminating ignorance, facilitating better understanding of the Muslim religion and providing mutual support. The association is involved in setting up women's classes and teaching the Quran, Hadith, Tauhid English, arithmetic and hygiene. Their school

started with one class in Tsafe and now has 42 classes in Tsafe and neighboring villages of the emirate.

The leader of the association said they did not have any money when they started the association, but the association now receives a monthly donation of N5,000 (£25) from the state government in the state capital. The money is used to buy books and stationery for the schools. The association also works under the umbrella of JIBWIS, which provides classrooms teachers for the school and designs the curriculum. Members of the association said they also collaborate with the larger FOMWAN, as most of their activities are similar and both are nursed by JIBWIS.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) women's wing is a relatively new association started by a Madakiya woman. According to the members, "...Angelina invited all women leaders and told us that women are participating in politics and government in other places and women in Madakiya are left behind. She advised us to join a political party so that we can have a say in government. Women who were at that meeting started the women's wing of PDP." The purpose of the association is to bring about the political participation of women in Madakiya and to bring the government closer to women. Members said they intend to nominate and elect a woman who will represent the aspirations of women in the village. She must be willing to give assistance to poor women and also have concern for orphans and widows.

At the time of this study, the party had about 120 members, all women from Madakiya who join the party because they aspire to participate in making decisions. Members said that participating in the party helps women gain independence. Leaders are elected by ballot from the wards, so that each ward has a chance of a leadership position.

Leaders are elected to serve for two years. At the time of this study, members were intending to support a woman to contest local government elections

In addition to campaigning for political power, the association also engages in cooperative farming. Members rotate farm labor on each others' farms and also sell their labor. Money or farm produce generated is shared between members. Also, grains are bought during harvest and kept to be sold when the prices go up. Profits are shared between members.

Members of the party are also members of the larger PDP party. "If we have a problem, we tell the councilor who pushes our problem to the local government so that we get a solution." In this way, the women's wing relies on the bigger PDP for financial support from the national party to run their campaigns. Leaders of the association attend meetings of the PDP as well as the Unity Forum in Kafanchan, where they said they get ideas about how to run their party. Members said they invite other associations to their activities and are also invited to the activities of other associations. As one member noted, "we have *zumunta*¹⁹ with women who do not participate in the party, such as women in our wards."

Women's groups in Madakiya such as the PDP make use of the structures of the larger and more powerful PDP as well as *Batadon*, which is an umbrella village association, to function. Members of *Batadon* interviewed said that their own association has little access to powerful institutions such as the local government but when they liaise with the bigger village association, they get both a voice within the association and access to the resources of the local government.

¹⁹ *Zumunta (Hausa)*: relationship through blood or marriage. Close relationship between people. Also refers to women's friendships and associations.

Other examples of associations which make use of structures of other institutions to function are the *adashe* associations formed in the work place, such as school teacher groups which operate within the school system. Examples of the use of formal structures by *adashe* groups were found in the *adashe* groups of Madakiya central primary school and secondary school and at the Kaltungo local government secretariat, which draws membership from Poshereng and Kalarin. These are run as formal associations with elected committees and constitutions that delineate how members take turns to get the pot.

Paulina Andrew, a school teacher in Madakiya, said that the *adashe* group she belongs to is run like an association, but is controlled by the headmistress who is the *Uwar adashe*.²⁰ Members make monthly contributions that are deducted by the *uwar adashe* from member's wages in order to prevent members from refusing to contribute once they have had their turn at the pot. The groups regulated by written laws and committees are modern inventions and suggest a crisis of trust, which may accompany heterogeneity of membership. The *adashe* groups practiced by housewives have no written laws and are based entirely on trust. Two reasons could be forwarded as explanations for this. One is that the practice of *adashe* predates modern western education and western ways of organizing and is suited to non-literate populations. The other explanation from social capital literature is that community members have played the prisoners dilemma²¹ many times and have reached an

²⁰ Mother of *adashe* or the convener of such groups. She is normally an older woman who is relatively well off and can be trusted to collect and disburse contributions. Interviewees said there are some rogue *adashe* mothers who show favoritism regarding the disbursement of contributions or embezzle the money contributed. Such women are ridiculed in songs and folk tales or may be taken to local courts.

²¹ The prisoners' dilemma is based on rational choice theory, which argues that social life constitutes the aggregated outcomes of all individual rational choices. The maximized individual outcome is contingent upon the effects of others' actions (Misztal 1996). In this formulation, each actor considers what they are likely to do and then makes the best choice to maximize his or her benefits.

equilibrium (Ostrom 1996; Putnam 1993; Misztal 1996) in which there are clear sanctions for defaulting.

Although women make use of other structures in order to participate in associational activity, borrowed structures might serve to limit women's agency and perpetuate their subordination. For example, through the JIBWIS and JNI men control activities where important decisions about women's Islamiyya school curriculum are taken. Also, women's interests are likely to be dominated by men's interests within the PDP political party in Madakiya where women are trying to gain political power. Within these organizations women are dominated and excluded to the 'women's wing' which suggests that they may not be able to negotiate change within such structures. In such collaborations, women's networks are subsumed under more powerful men's or other community networks. Women could then find it difficult to negotiate changes because they are working within male-biased structures over which they have no control.

Alternatively, it could be argued that women organize within masculine structures because doing so enables them to negotiate for incremental advances without challenging outright the structural systems that disadvantage them. For example, women in Tsafe and Kalarin observe seclusion but are allowed out of their homes to go to Islamiyya schools. Within the space of such schools, women are able to build other support networks to help with house work and child care and to pay for ceremonial expenses. In this context, women may be engaging in a patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti 1988) by attending Islamiyya schools that do not contravene the gender ideology of the communities in order to create their own space and expand their social networks, which are important sources of support. Put another way, women are actively manipulating the enabling condition of the social structure, namely

their right to education, in order to negotiate for better conditions for themselves by using the approved social space to engage in networking for mutual support and some economic activity. Referring to a verse in the Quran which says that “with every hardship there is ease,” leaders of FOMWAN said that they are using that “ease” to create spaces for themselves.

CONCLUSION

In the case studies presented, men and women participate in collective action for different purposes. Men engage in community development work, such as building schools, roads and culverts, while women engage in care giving activities, such as providing mutual support for house and farm work and childcare. Men also tend to participate more in community development associations because of their public orientation and relative power roles within communities. Women tend to engage in informal networks, such as school runs, child-care and *adashe* and *biki* networks. These divisions emanate from men’s and women’s different social positions and gender roles. While men’s participation in collective action is instrumental in maintaining their control of public space, women’s participation tends to reflect their domestic orientation and is in keeping with their traditional gender roles.

Gender-differentiated participation in collective action is more pronounced in Muslim communities, Women in Muslim communities have limited access to community institutions and in turn, they have less access to the resources embedded in such institutions and may be poorer as a result. The implication of this is that women will continue to remain poor, or their poverty may worsen as a result of restrictions on interaction and community participation, especially with the legislations of *Shariah*, unless there is a change to allow them to have access to education, markets, community associations and institutions because this has the

potential to increase their participation in decision-making, improve their economic situation and the general welfare of the household which may diffuse to the entire community. Without such change, women will continue to be subordinated in society, excluded from decision-making and isolated from sources of income and support for their livelihoods. This will mean increased poverty for women, the household and the entire community.

However, the case studies reveal that within these confines, women are challenging their social positions by engaging incrementally in the public arena. For example, the FOMWAN members in Kalarin have built and run their own schools, and the members of the women's cooperative society in Madakiya have provided classroom furniture for the village schools and are also members of political parties at the village and district levels. Such participation by women suggests that they are moving beyond the maintenance of their structural position to negotiate within the established social structure for better conditions.

Women's participation in associational activity in northern Nigeria could be looked at from two tiers. First, women's groups tend to be more effective in responding to the needs of women. The FOMWAN in Kalarin and Tsafe as well as the Women's Multi-purpose Cooperative Society in Madakiya are good examples. Second, women's groups fare better when they collaborate or have support from the men's groups because the men's groups tend to have better political connections and access to resources within and outside of the community. In this case, an effective strategy for collective action is collaboration between men's and women's groups rather than separatism or integration given the socio-cultural characteristics of communities in northern Nigeria.

The findings suggest that policymakers and development organizations in northern Nigeria must pay more attention to social contexts in order to understand the power and

gender structures as well as the rules and norms which shape social interaction and which may determine the types of social capital men and women access.

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