

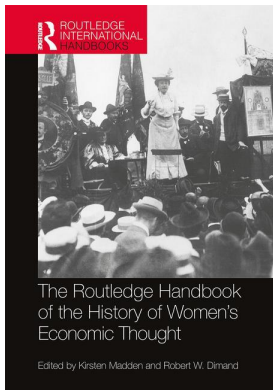
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The first 100 years of female economists in sub-Saharan Africa

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THE FIRST 100 YEARS OF FEMALE ECONOMISTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Lola Fowler and Robert W. Dimand

Introduction

The earliest literature on economic thought on Africa was not by Africans. The economic experience of West Africa was surveyed and analyzed first by writers from colonizing countries (e.g. Lady Flora Lugard 1905; Allan McPhee 1926; Margery Perham, ed. 1946–48a, b), often associated with colonial administration (see Barbara Ingham 1992). Africans had no chance to tell their own story until centuries after the onset of European economic contact with sub-Saharan Africa, toward the demise of colonialism. Two such scholars in the African diaspora are Howard University's George W. Brown, a pioneer with *Economic History of Liberia* penned as his 1938 LSE PhD dissertation and published in 1941, and *Politics in West Africa* as the most eminent example by Nobel laureate W. Arthur Lewis in 1965. Even later are contributions by African men working at African universities (e.g. R. Olufemi Ekundare 1973, at the University of Ife).¹

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC 1994, 2010) has given recent attention and encouragement to increasing participation of women in economics in Africa, as graduate students, university teachers, and in government. The 2016/17 AERC Annual Report states that 32% of participants in AERC research activities that year were women. Notably, approximately half of the 43 participants across two AERC econometrics workshops in 2016 and 2017 were women of Africa, and 13 out of 25 new fellowships for AERC's Collaborative PhD Programme went to women. Of 1,140 members in the Association for the Advancement of African Women Economists (AAWE),² 898 were African women economists, of whom 695 lived in Africa (410 professionals, 285 students) and 203 outside Africa (92 professionals, 111 students).³ The AAWE has active branches in Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda (see Asiedu 2015). Despite its substantial membership, the AAWE reports:

Data suggests that the lack of female representation is even more pervasive in African countries, especially in academia. The Economics Department at the University of Burundi has 15 male faculty members and NO female faculty members; the Economics Department at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana also has 18 male faculty members and NO female members. Women constitute only 10% (3 women and 27 men) of the Economics Department faculty at the University of Dar es Salaam

AAWE website; emphasis in the original

Yet several African women economists have attained prominence, primarily in the public sector rather than academia.⁴

This chapter examines the first generation of female economists in Africa. After an introductory overview, the next three sections deal with Southern Africa, East Africa and West Africa, highlighting female economists from each region. There is a short biography of each female economist from the respective sub-region in Africa, followed by their contributions to the economic history of their country. Notice is taken of their writings (articles and books) as well as of books and articles about them. This chapter considers the contributions only of female economists originally from Africa, whether white or black, excluding for example Polly Hill, who spent a decade at the University of Ghana before returning to Cambridge (see Dimand and Saffu 2017).

Economic history of Africa in relation to African women economists, introductory overview

Patrick Manning (1987) aptly identified that there are three separate literatures on economic history in Africa, the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial literature. Pre-colonial West Africa economic literature focused mainly on trade, especially along the trans-Saharan trade routes. Gold, ivory and slaves including skilled troops were traded for salts, beads and metal goods. Koumbi Saleh was a major trade center in the Ghana Empire (c.300–c.1235) and trade flourished under it through to the Kanem Bornu Empire. The accounts of such economic activities were recorded by Islamic scholars, notable among whom was the celebrated traveler Ibn Battuta of Tangier. The pre-colonial period also saw the rise of female political and economic leaders such as Amina of Zaria (Nigeria), Queen Nzhingha (Angola) and Yaa Asantewa. These women promoted trade, resisted European takeover and the slave trade, but were more noted for their role in national defense.

The colonial literature focused on international trade and government. There exist divergent views on data and perspective for this period. There is a colonial view and a national view which included those opposed to forms of colonialism but who accepted colonial data and worked within a colonial framework.

Foray Bay College, the first college in Africa founded during the colonial period in 1827, began issuing degrees in 1856 when it became affiliated with Durham College, England, but its focus was on the liberal arts of the time which did not include political economy. Foray Bay College is notable for preparing the first set of formally educated Africans who would later advocate for self-rule. The University of Cape Town was established in 1829 and later taught economics as a discipline and thus the first generation of indigenous African economists emerged during the early 20th century. For example, Sheila van der Horst graduated from the University of Cape Town in 1930 and, after earning a PhD at the London School of Economics, returned to teach from 1933 until she retired in 1974 (Archer and Heywood 2003). Several female economists wrote book reviews published in economic journals at the time. A few women published their own papers, notably in the *South African Journal of Economics* from its foundation in 1933 (Pollak 1933a, 1933b, 1936, 1940; Van der Horst 1934, 1935, 1939, 1941). It was common to find these economists employing their pens as weapons to caution against the evils of their day. This chapter studies examples of such women: Hansi Pauline Pollak, Helen Suzman and Sheila van der Horst from South Africa. These were the first generation of university-educated women, members of the white liberal opposition to apartheid and outspoken opponents of the white supremacist National Party. Their contribution in addressing economic and political issues remained relevant long after their time.

Post-colonial literature indicates the growing female literacy levels in Africa as more and more women attained post-secondary education. This study showcases Gloria Nikoi of Ghana, Dambisa Moyo of Zambia, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia to mention a few. Though African women economists are substantially under-represented in African universities, several African female economists have taken up high-ranking political positions as well as positions in international economics agencies, such as the World Bank, and have significantly affected the economic wellbeing of their respective countries. Curiously, there is no prominent African woman economist in Francophone Africa. In contrast, in Tanzania, Ghana, Namibia, Liberia and Nigeria, female economists have emerged as finance ministers, a foreign affairs minister, central bankers, and even a prime minister! These women are perceived as technocrats (hence, not perceived by politicians as rivals) with internationally recognized skills and credentials from reputable institutions such as Harvard, Oxford, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), with World Bank experience and the like. These credentials matter to aid donors such as the International Monetary Fund and Paris Club. From Hansi Pollak to Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the voices of African female economists are now heard around the world.

Southern Africa

Hansi Pollak – South Africa⁵

Hansi Pauline Pollak, economist, sociologist, welfare worker and activist, was born in Johannesburg in 1905. Pollak published actively in economics in the 1930s. She published several articles in the early volumes of the *South African Journal of Economics* (Pollak 1933a, 1933b, 1936, 1940, and two book reviews in 1934), on such topics as women workers in Witwatersrand industries and the growth of the European-descended population in South Africa.

She served as an officer in South Africa's Women's Army Auxiliary Services during World War II. In 1944 she was seconded to undertake welfare among refugees and displaced persons, as deputy director of welfare, for five United Nations Refugee Relief Association (UNRRA) camps in the Middle East. She was also director of field services among displaced persons in the British, French and American occupied zones in Germany.

Pollak served as director of welfare services for the World Council of Churches from 1953 to 1954. She was involved in working for the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) and served on the executive from 1954. SAIRR, established in 1929, is among the most liberal research and policy organizations in South Africa. It is concerned with promoting ideas and policies to free South Africa from unemployment, poverty and dependency. However, by 1948 it had lost one of its most powerful political allies – Jan Hofmeyr – and the pro-apartheid National Party had gained a stranglehold on the political scene in South Africa. Pollak was elected vice president of the SAIRR on three separate occasions and also became an honorary member of the organization.

From 1962 she became a professor and head of the Department of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Natal. She later started an Educational Bursary Fund, aimed at offering education bursaries to less privileged children. In 1980 she was awarded an honorary doctorate in social science by the University of Natal in recognition of her community welfare work. Notable later publications include *Housing and Human Needs in South Africa* (1972) and *Pensions and Welfare: A Review of Differentiation and Discrimination* (1977). Pollak died in Cape Town in 1982 (South African History Online, Web, March 22, 2015).

Activist

Dr. Pollak was the first woman to publish in the *South African Journal of Economics* in the 1933 inaugural issue, followed by Sheila van der Horst who published there from the second volume onwards. Few other women joined them in that journal until 1960, when Mary V. Piercy of the University of the Witwatersrand became a very active contributor, with seven articles from June 1960 to December 1963. The *South African Journal of Economics* was conspicuously open compared to the dominant forces in South African society, for instance publishing in 1960 an article (on banking and finance in the Sudan) by Andrew F. Brimmer, later the first African-American member of the Federal Reserve Board. Pollak wrote articles regarding labor laws, welfare issues and demography, and compared the economic conditions of blacks in the United States with those in South Africa. She was a community activist who tried to advance peaceful racial relations in her homeland while condemning racist policies through education. In a letter she wrote to Z.K. Mathews, a political activist and fellow academician, she expressed her admiration and support on behalf of the Natal Regional Committee of SAIRR in her capacity as chairperson of the committee. Mr. Mathews had resigned his position when his school (now the University of Fort Hare) was relegated from being a university to a mere ethnic college for the Xhosa community alone. An education fellowship has been instituted in her name in recognition of her support of education, particularly for the under-privileged.⁶

Helen Suzman – South Africa⁷

Helen Suzman was born Helen Gavronski to Lithuanian Jewish parents on November 7, 1917, in Germiston, Transvaal, South Africa (see Suzman 1994; Godsell 2011; Renwick 2013). She graduated from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1940 with a degree in Economics and Economic History. She worked with the South African War Supplies Board as a statistician then went on to lecture in her alma mater until 1952. While at the university, she became a member of the SAIRR (of which, like Pollak and Van der Horst, she was a leader) as well as forming a chapter for the United Party (UP) in the school. She became a member of parliament in 1953 under the umbrella of the UP representing the Houghton Constituency, thus beginning a remarkable career in politics. Dissension within the UP caused Mrs. Suzman to resign and form the new Progressive Party with a few others that same year.

She was often a lone voice for change and stood staunchly against the pro-Apartheid National Party policies. She spent 36 years in parliament and did not waver in her resolve for change in South Africa long after retirement. She was a Dame Commander of the British Empire (DBE) and the holder of several honorary degrees from universities across the world. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize twice. She died on New Year's Day in 2009 at the age of 91.

Politician and anti-apartheid fighter

Helen Suzman struck some as a deceptive figure. Elegant, poised and immaculately coiffured, she held her own for 13 years as the lone liberal member in parliament. In parliament she was often heckled for her ancestry. She attacked her opponents fearlessly and unrelentingly with her sharp tongue and quick wit. P.W. Botha, a South African former prime minister, is quoted as referring to her as a “vicious little cat” while an earlier prime minister once told her, “I’ve written you off” to which she retorted, “The whole world has written you off.” She was notorious for asking endless embarrassing questions about the repressive apartheid regime. When reprimanded by

government minister that her questions embarrassed her country, she responded that it was their answers that caused the country embarrassment (*The Economist*, January 10, 2009, p. 77).

Unlike other members of parliament, she used her positions to give voice to the marginalized in society, some of whom she came to know by visiting prison and slums. Late President Nelson Mandela recounted her visits during his imprisonment with affection. Among her friends and admirers is 1994 Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Though praiseworthy, Suzman is not free from criticism. Among other anti-apartheid groups, she has been criticized along with her liberal colleagues for supporting a qualified franchise under which only educated blacks with at least a college degree could vote.

She stood true to liberal beliefs in “free markets, capitalism, the paramountcy of democracy and civil institutions and equal opportunity” (*Economist*, January 10, 2009, p. 77). It is in this respect that she opposed economic sanctions against South Africa. She believed, instead, that non-violence and boycott by South African blacks could lead to change. While her tenure in parliament did not hinder the National Party apartheid regime or stop any law, she made a stand for freedom and justice. In the words of Mandela, “No-one can do more than her duty on earth” (*Economist*, January 18, 2014, p. 70).

Sheila Van der Horst – South Africa

Sheila van der Horst was born on October 27, 1909 to an English mother of feminist conviction and Dr. J.G. van der Horst who was among the foremost Afrikaner financiers. She graduated from the University of Cape Town in 1930 and earned a PhD from the London School of Economics. She lectured at the University of Cape Town from 1933, retiring in 1974, and then served four terms as an elected member of the University Council after her retirement. In 1993, Van der Horst was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Economic Science honoris causa from the University of Cape Town.⁸

She wrote *Native Labour in South Africa* (1942), a revision of her doctoral thesis, and this has become a landmark study in labor economics, reissued by another publisher in 1971. She also is author of the book *African Workers in Town: A Study of Labour in Cape Town* (1964). Her concern and views on the economic effects of apartheid and on racial and gender inequality are encapsulated in many of her writings, among which are “Equal Pay for Equal Work” (1954), “The Effects of Industrialization on Race Relations in South Africa” (1965a), *Lessons from the South African Labour Market* (1965b), *Women as an Economic Force in South Africa* (1976), *Discrimination in Employment and Wages* (1977), and *Race Discrimination in South Africa* (1981). She also wrote on macroeconomic policy issues: how to finance South Africa’s participation in World War II (Van der Horst 1941); inflation (1944); and full employment (1946).

She served on the Council of the Economic Society of South Africa and was a member of the Executive Committee and Chairman of the Cape Western Regional Committee of the SAIRR. In her obituary (Archer and Heywood 2003), she is remembered as a gifted person with clear understanding of many intellectual and moral dilemmas of her time. She remained liberal and an avowed critic of sectionalism and concentration of power. Throughout her career she published and taught under her maiden name rather than taking the name of her husband, the Cape Town lawyer Stanley Field.

The academic labor economist

By the 1950s, the South African population could be grouped into four categories. The natives Africans (or Bantu) were the majority, numbering about 8.5 million. The 2.5 million

Whites were mainly descendants of servants to the original Dutch East India Company as well as European immigrants. The Coloured population were mixed bloods, products of inter-marriage and concubinage, and numbered about 1 million, and the 366,000 Indians or Asians were descendants of indentured labor from India brought to work in the sugar plantations on the Natal coast (Van der Horst 1955, pp. 72–73). Dr. Van der Horst traces a comprehensive historical picture of the evolution of native labor.

The first stage shows the unsuccessful attempts by the Cape government to control natives seeking work from adjoining territories. The next stage saw the spread of agricultural farming and discovery of gold and diamonds. These factors increased the demand for labor. Government intervened by imposing heavy taxes on natives thereby enforcing labor. As wages rose due to supply shortages, the Transvaal Chamber of Mines set itself up as a monopoly to control employment and recruitment to mines. Blacks continued to perform the majority of manual labor while Whites possessed the management skill, capital and initiative. The third stage witnessed economic forces leading to a common system of production with the majority in some form of paid employment. Native labor became increasingly feared as competition. The Whites saw them as a hostile proletariat. This led to the institution of different forms of job preservation, ownership restrictions on the occupation of land and freedom of movement.

Dr. Van der Horst highlighted the wage disparity among the different racial groups with Africans earning on average 10–12.5% of White earnings for similar work. Besides outright discrimination, she attributed the perpetuation of such inequality to “innate differences in upbringing, environment, employment opportunities, education and property acquisition” (Van der Horst 1955, p. 74). It is no wonder that stagnation and poverty prevailed.

Dr. Van der Horst’s economic analysis was delivered for a general audience to stress the need for adjustment and mutual accommodation. She stressed the cost of discrimination particularly the difficulty of enforcement, as well as social and cultural erosion. Apartheid, she argued, is “manifest instability, injustice and wastefulness. It is economically impracticable and is used by its proponents to make racial discrimination morally acceptable” (1955, p. 82).

She pleaded for an end to those restrictive practices and the overcoming of disparities in social services and education which impeded “progress in the community as a whole, and the Native population in particular” (Van der Horst, 1942, p. 324). Such labor policies, she argued were based “on a short view of European advantage, preferring the convenience of the present generation of the European population to the prospects of prosperity and peace of their descendants” (Van der Horst 1942, p. 325). She noted that as economies become global, the economic outlook could not be divorced from the political. South Africa implemented these necessary changes, albeit 50 years later with the end of apartheid.

Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila – Namibia⁹

Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila is the current, and Namibia’s first female, prime minister. She was born at Otamanzi in Omusati region of Namibia on October 12, 1967. She went into exile in 1980 and continued her elementary and secondary school education in Sierra Leone. She went to the United States where she obtained a Bachelor’s degree in Economics in 1994 from Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, a renowned historically black college, and then returned home. She began her political career as a desk officer in the Office of the President during the administration of President Sam Nujoma and gained prominence shortly thereafter when appointed director general at the National Planning Commission at the age of 27.

She is a member of the South West African Peoples Organization (SWAPO) and has been a member of the National Assembly since 1995. Within SWAPO, she is credited with turning the

party's financial fortunes around in her position as Secretary for Economic Affairs. She served as Namibian Minister of Finance from 2003 to 2015 becoming not only the first female to hold that position but also the longest serving finance minister in the country's history.

A shrewd politician, Kuugongelwa-Amadhila is known to avoid partisan in-fighting while learning fast and on the job how to navigate the often-tricky political minefield. Her tenure as finance minister is reputed for its fiscal discipline and ambitious targets. In her first staff meeting address to her ministry in 2012, arresting the misuse of public funds was given top priority. Her first budget as minister is remembered for limiting government spending. She presented Namibia's first budget surplus in the 2006–07 financial year. With her as prime minister, Namibia can confidently look forward to achieving further successes.

Dambisa Felicia Moyo – Zambia¹⁰

Dr. Dambisa Moyo was born in Lusaka on February 2, 1969 without an official birth certificate. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Chemistry and a Master of Business Administration, both degrees from the American University, Washington D.C. She earned another Master's but this time in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University in 1997. She obtained her doctorate in Economics from St. Antony's College, Oxford in 2002. Her dissertation topic was titled, "Essays on the determinants of the components of savings in developing countries".

She is renowned, and controversial, as a global economist and author who has made the *Time Magazine* best seller list with each of her books. Her notable books include, *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa* (2009), *How the West Was Lost* (2011) and *Winner Takes All: China's Race for Resources and What it Means for the Rest of the World* (2012). She is a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom and of the Friedrich Hayek Lifetime Achievement Award (2013) as well as earning a place on *Time Magazine's* 100 most influential people (2009) and Oprah's 20 remarkable visionaries (2009). Dr. Moyo is a regular contributor to several financial journals and networks such as the *Financial Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, CNN and Bloomberg.

She worked as an economist at Goldman Sachs and as a consultant to the World Bank. She serves on the board of such global organizations as Barclay's Bank, SABMiller and Barrick Gold. In addition, she serves on the World Economic Forum's Network of Global Agenda Councils on Global Imbalances, and is a patron of Absolute Return for Kids (known as ARK) which is an international children's charity.

International economist and author

Dr. Moyo is a macroeconomic analyst, and her book *Dead Aid*, in particular, has received more attention than any other book to come out of Africa in recent times. One indisputable fact among both admirers and critics of Dr. Moyo is her impressive resumé. However, the manner in which that translates into opinion about her books is another matter. *Dead Aid* declares that financial aid to Africa has not improved but worsened the lot of its people, as the majority of the continent continues to wallow in poverty. This is compounded by the fact that African leaders see such aid as easy free money and are not accountable, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle of over dependency, market distortion, corruption and need for more aid. She offers an alternative in private capital raised either domestically or from international investors so that the leaders are accountable either to these lenders or to taxpayers. She uses examples of other successful countries which have employed micro-finance such as Bangladesh through its

Grameen banks. Prior policies in most African countries, she alleges, have hindered the growth of home-grown capitalists.

Most of her critics argue that Dr. Moyo tends to gloss over valid historical details. An example is the case she makes of government aid policies hampering the growth of an entrepreneurial elite who will invest in their own countries. Critics show aid hampering entrepreneurship not to be the case in at least one example. A government aid project instituted during the colonial era in the southern province of Zambia was to build up capitalist farmers among Tonga people. This class “went into dramatic decline with tragic consequences” as aid was reduced or cut from them (Moorsom 2010, p. 365).

She is also accused of being another neoliberal stooge who has provided ammunition for anti-aid groups instead of pushing for effective aid. It is agreed that international financial aid to Africa is not without its flaws, such as being self-serving and promoting protectionism, but no aid is equally damning (Moorsom 2010).

Moyo seems to suggest cures, but critics understand that is no uniform cure for Africa’s economic woes, at least not one that has worked in Asia or the West. The reason is that they do not share similar history or trajectory. Colonialism has robbed nations of whatever identity they had prior and superimposed its own ideology. These nations now must sew up a patchwork of who they think they are with who they have been taught to be. For example, Nigeria is approximately 923,768 square kilometers in area (574,003 square miles) with over 520 languages: the implication is that Nigeria has a new language approximately every 1,000 square miles. The different sub-groups within each nation must jointly build a nation under their current dispensation as equals, which is no small feat as they are usually historically unequal. This inequality and failure to achieve consensus is at the root of most civil strife and political instability, and forms a backdrop for post-independent policies of these countries.

The existence of effective and functioning infrastructure and market framework amid a stable political climate is crucial for economic growth and development, aid or no aid. As for the idea in Moyo (2012) that the investment from China is the elixir for Africa’s economic progress, that remains to be seen as it is early days yet. A word of caution about private capital and free trade. Both concepts are business centered and not motivated by patriotism. While the parties are bargaining as equals and there are returns on investment it might work. However, when the governments change or business cycle dips, the investor pulls back. What happens to the poor farmer whose crop has been wiped out and who has a family to feed without the intervention of the state?¹¹

East Africa

*Hamdani Zakia Meghji – Tanzania*¹²

Zakia Hamdani Meghji was born on December 31, 1946, in Zanzibar where she had her early education. She obtained her Bachelor’s in Education (1971) and Master’s in Economic History (1979), both from the University of Dar es Salaam. Her Master’s thesis was on women workers. She worked as a lecturer at the Moshi University College of Cooperative and Business Studies, then as programme officer at the International Cooperative Alliance (AIC). Meghji entered politics in 1985 as a member of parliament where she serves to date. In her political career, she has served as minister of health from 1992 to 1995, minister of natural resources and tourism from 1995–2005 and minister of finance from 2006 to 2008. She also served as president of the Africa Travel Association for two terms, where she is reputed to have introduced many important and timely initiatives in terms of developing the tourism sector, sponsoring promotional tours in the USA, and introducing a Tourism Awards Programme. She remains the longest serving tourism

minister in the country, and has brought many positive changes in the ministry. She has co-authored a book on women and cooperatives with late husband Ramadhan Meghji and Clement Kwayu (Meghi et al. 1985). The book focuses on women and cooperatives as agents of economic change, particularly rural development in Tanzania.

Saada Mkuya Salum – Tanzania¹³

Saada Mkuya Salum was born in 1975. There is no official record of when and where. She is the second female to hold the office of finance minister in Tanzania since its independence. She holds a Master's of Business Administration from Herriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland, and is currently studying for a business PhD from the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). She served as commissioner of external finance in the Zanzibar government. She was subsequently appointed deputy finance minister in 2012 and became minister for finance and planning upon the death of her predecessor William Mginwa. Salum also serves as a governor at the International Monetary Fund and of the Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank.

West Africa

Olubanke King Akerele – Liberia¹⁴

Olubanke King Akerele was born May 11, 1946. Her grandfather was Charles B. King, the 16th President of Liberia. She studied at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and Brandeis University in Massachusetts where she obtained a B.A. in Economics. She earned an M.A. in Manpower Economics from Northeastern University in Boston and another M.A. in Economics of Education from Columbia University. She worked for the United Nations for 20 years in various capacities which included deputy director of the United Nations Development Program for Women. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa published her studies on *Women and the Fishing Industry in Liberia: Measures of Women's Participation* (Akerele 1979a), *Women Workers in Ghana, Kenya, Zambia: A Comparative Analysis of Women's Employment in the Modern Wage Sector* (1979b), and *Traditional Palm Oil Processing: Women's Role and the Application of Appropriate Technology* (1983). Akerele served as minister of commerce and industry under President Johnson Sirleaf in 2005. She was later made minister of foreign affairs in a cabinet shake-up in 2007. As foreign minister it was her challenge to attract international investment toward rebuilding a country recently devastated by civil war. She resigned the position in 2010 when there was another cabinet reshuffle.

Akerele is a champion of women in leadership and believes that women leaders have a unique perspective toward real positive change. She is the author of several books including *The "How" of Integration of Women in Development Planning* (1981), *Women's Leadership in Post-Conflict Liberia: My Journey* (2012) and *The "Growing" of Africa's Emergent Leadership* (2014).

Tinuke Johnson – Nigeria¹⁵

Dr. Tinuke Lola Johnson was born 1942 at Onse Agbedi, Ogun State, Nigeria. She attended the University of West London and London School of Economics where she earned her Bachelor's and an M.Sc. (Statistics) in 1966. Her PhD was obtained from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria, in 2009 at the age of 67 with a doctoral thesis on the "Effects of Correlation and Identification Status on Methods of Estimating Parameters of System of Simultaneous Equations Models."

Dr. Johnson began her career as an assistant statistician in the British Ministry of Health between 1966 and 1970 where she was the first black professional. She lectured part-time at both the University of West London and the North Western Polytechnic, London. Upon her return to Nigeria in 1970, she took up a lecturer position at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria's premier university, where she rose to become a reader. In conjunction with the then acting head of department, they developed the Bachelor's, Master's, Postgraduate Diploma and Doctorate programs. Along with a few other pioneering colleagues, she succeeded in separating the Mathematics and Statistics Department from the Computer Science Department. She worked briefly at Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State in Nigeria between January 2003 and February 2005.

Dr. Johnson is no stranger to pioneering in her professional life. She holds the distinction of being the first female professionally accredited statistician in Africa (*a fortiori* Nigeria), the only non-British professional statistician in the British Civil Service before 1970, co-author of the first statistics textbook in Africa and the first female head of department of statistics in Africa as well.

She is widely published and is among the first indigenous Nigerian females to publish in the *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies* (Johnson 1973). Her publication credits include *Cost Benefit Analysis of Education in Nigeria* (1981; with Prof. Segun Adesina) and *Statistics for Beginners* and its workbook (1975; jointly with late Prof. S. Adamu). She is the holder of several awards and scholarships. Dr. Johnson is an elected Fellow of the Nigerian Statistical Association (NSA), and is the managing director and chief consultant of DENT Projects Limited.

Mother of statistics

In her book *Statistics and its Development in Nigeria* (2013) Dr. Johnson reflects on personal gains and pains of over 40 years of teaching statistics in universities across Nigeria while tracing the inception of a statistics department in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ibadan. She mentions the hostilities involved in obtaining recognition as a professional within the Faculty of Social Sciences as well as a deployment from the economics department. Her career path within the university was often thwarted by internal politics among her superiors. She was not only denied promotion at times but nearly obliterated from the department's history! Perhaps the most painful example of such victimization was the abrupt withdrawal of her PhD supervisor due to "personal reasons" at the point of submitting a title. The incident caused her much mental anguish. With encouragement from family and colleagues she summoned courage to obtain her doctorate from the University of Ilorin 33 years later at the age of 67 years.

Dr. Johnson believes that statistics, like geography, should be located in both Social Science and Science Faculties. She remains a strong advocate for mentoring of junior colleagues in the academy as well as promoting statistics outside academia through her consultancy work.

*Gloria Nikoi – Ghana*¹⁶

Gloria Amon Nikoi (née Addae) was born in Ghana in 1930. She was one of the few females to attend the prestigious Achimota College, Accra. Most of the early students of this school went on to play important roles in the development of Ghana. She obtained her degree in Economics and Modern History from St Andrew's University in Scotland (Nikoi 1998, p. 128). She is a career public servant who has held several public and international positions. From 1969 to 1974, she was Deputy Chief of Mission to the United Nations, then she worked as a senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She later was the foreign affairs minister under the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) government of Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings in 1979 and has remained the only woman to hold such a position. In 1981 she became chairperson of the Bank of Housing and Construction.

She has served as director of the African Development Bank (ADB) where she advised also on gender issues. She was part of the Ghanaian delegation to the Lagos Plan for Action for Economic Development of Africa (1980–2000). This was a draft of an action plan by African leaders blaming the International Monetary Fund and World Bank for the stringent conditions placed on African nations that aggravated their economic woes, particularly the Structural Adjustment Program. She was the first chairperson of the Council of the Ghana Stock Exchange when it was inaugurated on November 12, 1990.

Career diplomat and champion of gender issues

Gender issues are particularly dear to Mrs. Nikoi, particularly development from the grassroots level up. She sees women as necessary agents of economic change and development. As such her view on development is aimed at empowering women and building on the traditional structures toward achieving progress.

She illustrated the prominence of women in commerce, particularly in urban distribution of cloth from wholesale purchase to the petty trader retail efforts. She used the number of passbook holders, deposit and credits pattern to show that the majority, by far, were women ([Nikoi] Addae 1956).

Her paper “Change Agents in the Development of Financial Services for Small Scale Enterprises in Ghana” (1995) furthered this view and advocated that financial services providers bridge the gap between the formal and informal financial economy. To achieve self-reliance and sustainable growth, she opined that production, productivity and incomes of private entrepreneurs in the informal and small-scale enterprise (SSE) sectors must grow. Such growth must be accomplished through innovative and bold policies that target rural and inner-city areas. This is no surprise since such sectors have traditionally been, and continue to be, dominated by women. These SSE are grassroots enterprises and already have the capabilities and human capital to perform credit and financial services which formal financial institutions could promote by divesting of such functions. By extension, rural banks are more decentralized and accessible and thus are better able to serve informal and SSE sectors and make the needed critical improvement to the local economy (Nikoi 1995, p. 155).

Olufunmilayo Oloruntimehin – Nigeria¹⁷

Professor Olufunmilayo Oloruntimehin was born on June 17, 1942. She was a Professor of Criminology at the Obafemi Awolowo University for 30 years in the sociology department. Her research area covered sociology, criminology and sociology of law, but she was also among the first women published in the *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*. In her writings as well as through her outreach programs, she continues to advocate for societal change toward those incarcerated and their rehabilitation back into civil society. She is particularly focused on helping to alleviate the plight of women in prison with their innocent children. She strives to bring attention to the inhumane conditions in Nigerian prisons and those unjustly imprisoned. Professor Oloruntimehin is another example of many unsung female heroes in Africa.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala – Nigeria¹⁸

Dr. Okonjo-Iweala was born in Ogwashi-Uku, Delta State, Nigeria. She was educated at Harvard University where she earned an A.B. in Economics, graduating magna cum laude. She obtained a PhD in regional economics and development from the MIT in 1981. Her dissertation topic was on credit policy, rural financial markets and Nigeria’s agricultural development.

She received an international fellowship from the American Association of University Women (AAUW) which supported her doctoral studies.

She started her career at the World Bank in 1982 as a development economist, rising to the position of vice president and corporate secretary in 2002. She served two terms as minister of finance in Nigeria first under the Obasanjo administration (2003 to 2006) and later under the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan (2011 to 2015) with the additional office of coordinating minister for the economy.¹⁹ She briefly served as minister of foreign affairs. She was appointed a managing director of the World Bank from 2007 to 2011, and was one of three nominees for World Bank president in 2012. Had she been elected, women would have led four of the world's major public financial institutions, with Christine Lagarde at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Janet Yellen at the Federal Reserve and, from 2013, Elvira Nabiullina as governor of the Russian Central Bank. Okonjo-Iweala lost to Dartmouth College president Jim Yong Kim, the U.S. nominee, despite her stellar qualifications and emphatic endorsement by *The Economist*. As a member of the Governing Council of Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority, she provided advice and counsel to the Board of Directors. She was also an adviser to the World Bank on the Stolen Assets Recovery initiative. Other World Bank positions include director of operations in the Middle East and North Africa region, and country director for the South-East Asia and Mongolia Country unit. She was a member of the Boards of Governors of the ADB, the IMF, and the Islamic Development Bank. She is a member or chair of numerous boards and advisory groups in the public, private and non-governmental sectors, including DATA, the Clinton Global Initiative, the Nelson Mandela Institution and the African Institutes of Science and Technology, and Friends of the Global Fund Africa.

She is also a recipient of numerous awards and honors including *Time Magazine* European Hero 2004, *Euromoney Magazine* Global Finance Minister of the Year 2005, *Financial Times-The Banker* African Finance Minister of the Year 2005. She has Honorary Doctorates of Law from Colby College in 2007 and Brown University in 2006 and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Northern Caribbean University, Jamaica.

Reformer or politician?

Nigeria discovered oil in commercial quantities in the 1960s and steadily shifted focus from an agricultural-based economy with an emerging mineral extraction sector to an economy that is oil based. Nigeria was never able to translate the significant oil wealth into a better standard of living for its people. Rather, it exhibited all the classic economic woes of Dutch disease – a sudden influx of foreign exchange income that causes inflation and appreciation of the real exchange rate, resulting in contraction of other parts of the economy (Okonjo-Iweala 2012, p. 3). While other resource-rich countries such as Norway and Canada have turned their Dutch disease symptoms around, Nigeria continues to grapple with a struggling economy and the majority of its populace living in poverty.

This was the scene for Dr. Okonjo-Iweala's debut as minister of finance in 2003. She stated that her initial task was to establish credibility, fairness and social trust. She formed an economic team that shared this vision and who identified four major challenges responsible for the poor state of the economy. These were: weak economic management, volatile public spending, and monoculture production; weak and institutionalized corruption in governance; bureaucratic inefficiencies that are hostile to the private sector (Okonjo-Iweala 2012, p. 14).

Dr. Okonjo-Iweala, with members of her economic team, outlined their tasks as follows:

- 1 address macroeconomic volatility and fight corruption;
- 2 address structural features that hinder private-sector enterprise by promoting privatization, deregulation and liberalization;
- 3 reform the civil service, trade and tariffs, customs and the banking sector;
- 4 restore social trust and growth; and
- 5 obtain debt relief.

They were successful in implementing several of the reforms outlined above. They improved Nigeria's financial stability and fostered greater fiscal transparency by de-linking oil prices used to formulate the budget from the more volatile world price. This led to US\$17 billion in savings through the Excess Crude Account which was deployed to shore up the economy when oil prices fell (Okonjo-Iweala 2012, p. 120). The launch of structural reforms to many loss-making enterprises led to improved outlook and performance of the financial sector. Setting up the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) led to the investigation, arrest, conviction and jail time for members of the rulers who had stolen public funds with impunity. Her efforts through her team led to the recovery of stolen assets from Switzerland alone worth US\$505 million. This is considerable for a country unable to pay its medical doctors and teachers for months on end.

The successful negotiation with the Paris Club to eliminate US\$30 billion of Nigeria's external debt is, arguably, one of Dr. Okonjo-Iweala's major accomplishments as finance minister. To a large extent it "acted as a signal that policies had improved and this further improved investor confidence" and "as a consequence there was an increase in foreign direct investment and portfolio flows" (Okonjo-Iweala 2012, p. 121). She noted, however, that she and her team could have done better by focusing on the politics and political economy of the reforms. Regardless, her reforms gave hope to Nigerians about their prospects and the future of their country. It revealed that there are selfless Nigerians willing to heed the national call to service. Dr. Okonjo-Iweala is among them.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf – Liberia²⁰

Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was born in Monrovia on October 29, 1938. She earned an Associate degree in Accounting and a Bachelor's in Economics, both from Madison Business College, Madison. She received a Master of Public Administration degree from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, a degree that included economics (see Johnson Sirleaf 2009; Scully 2016; Cooper 2018). She began her political career as assistant minister of finance under the administration of President William Tolbert. Army Sergeant Samuel Doe overthrew Tolbert's government and offered Johnson Sirleaf the position of president of the Liberian Bank of Development and Investment, which she initially accepted. She later fled to exile in Nairobi.

She subsequently worked in the international banking community in such institutions as the World Bank, Citibank and Equator Bank (a subsidiary of HSBC). During this time, she also ran for Senate representing the Monteserrado County in 1985. She was sentenced to 10 years in prison for speaking out against Doe's regime. She won the Senate seat but refused to accept as a protest against election fraud. This time she went into exile in the United States.

Johnson Sirleaf supported Charles Taylor in his bloody rebellion against President Samuel Doe though she later disagreed with him. In 1997, she ran unsuccessfully against Charles Taylor who later charged her with treason. However, after Taylor was removed, and in 2005 as leader of the United Party, she was elected President of Liberia, becoming the first African woman to be elected head of state and the first black elected female president. She completed her second

term as president in 2018 in a tenure that is marked by growth and political stability. She shared the Nobel Peace Prize with two other women, Tawakkul Karman and Leymah Gbowee, for non-violent struggle for the safety of women and women's right to full participation in peace-building work.

Madam President

In 2002, Johnson Sirleaf co-wrote *Women, War and Peace* with Elisabeth Rehn saying, "As former Defence and Finance Ministers, and as Presidential candidates, we understand the world of politics, and we have a keen sense for ripe political moments." This quote profoundly expresses the timing of her political strategies which has led to numerous successes. She is a relentless champion of women's rights and empowerment, particularly toward equipping women with proper support and training, recommendations that she and Rehn included in their study. She also supports the mobilization of women leaders as a member of the Council of Women World leaders. As president, Johnson Sirleaf issued an executive order mandating elementary education that is free and compulsory for school-aged children. Her administration has achieved debt relief from the country's creditors, including the IMF, Paris Club and other bilateral creditors. She maintained an open foreign policy with the international community and mended previously strained relations with Liberia's neighbors. Her limited tolerance for corruption among public officials and decisiveness earned her the moniker "Iron Lady": she dismissed her whole cabinet in November 2010 replacing them roughly a month later without seven of the original members. However, *The Economist*, September 7, 2013, p. 50, subtitled an article about her, "The president keeps the peace but fails to reduce graft."

Another major criticism of President Johnson Sirleaf concerned her decision to go against the recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which she established. The TRC included her in a list of people who should be banned from holding public office. Her response to the crisis posed by the Ebola virus was also controversial, as would have been any policies by any government facing that crisis. However, it is undisputed that she has done much good in Liberia: according to *The Economist*, she is "arguably the best President the country has ever had."

Conclusion

The women of Africa in this chapter are but a few that have risen to prominence internationally and locally. There remain many more whose efforts are undocumented but whose legacy carries on in their students, their children and others affected by their works. Whether by adopting a liberal approach to economic development or by advocating state support of cooperatives and impoverished farmers, African female economists offered substantial solutions and implemented needed changes. They contributed to economics and to economic policy-making, both as academics and as central bankers, government ministers and public officials. Female economists have sometimes been aided in attaining influential positions closed to other African women through the prestige of gaining such credentials as Harvard or MIT degrees or experience at the World Bank or United Nations, and by being viewed by politicians as technocrats rather than as rival politicians. Whether staring down political opponents alone or fighting corruption to redeem a national image, these women are strategists as well as the muscle that brings those policies to life. This is the power of education, and particularly formal education, playing an indispensable role for African female economists to emerge, find their voices, share their ideas and aspire to public offices. These ideas, dreams and aspirations are the ones that will ultimately shape Africa into the global giant she is meant to be.

Notes

- 1 Gerardo Serra provides an overview of the development of writing on economics in Africa (in Barnett 2015).
- 2 AAAWE was founded in March 2012 at the initiative of Elizabeth Asiedu, an economics professor at the University of Kansas.
- 3 Data taken from AAAWE website, March 2017.
- 4 Two such women not documented in detail in this chapter are Sarah Alade, deputy governor of the Bank of Nigeria, and Frannie A. Léautier, treasurer of the African Economics Research Consortium and former chief operating officer and senior vice-president of the African Development in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.
- 5 Some information on Hansi Pollak is from www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/hansi-pauline-pollak-welfare-worker-and-social-activist-born (accessed May 2015).
- 6 www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/hansi-pauline-pollak-welfare-worker-and-social-activist-born (accessed May 2015).
- 7 Some biographical information is available from the following sources. Obituaries: "Helen Suzman, Relentless Challenger of Apartheid System, is dead at 91," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), December 31, 2008; "Helen Suzman" *The Economist*, January 10, 2009. Also see "Helen Suzman" (2015). The Biography.com website. Retrieved 02:19, May 17, 2015 from www.biography.com/people/helen-suzman-9499766
- 8 Information from Archer and Heywood 2003 obituary.
- 9 For biographical information, see "Namibia: Profile – Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, all Africa Vol. 0826 (2015, March). Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com/stories/201503120826.html>
- 10 Biographical information on Moyo drawn from blurbs in her books, and from Simon Houpt, "The Private Life of a Public Intellectual," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), April 23, 2011, p. B5.
- 11 The ideas in this paragraph and the one before it are Fowler's, based on reading several of Moyo's critics; particularly Moorsom (2010), Madelene Bunting (*The Guardian*, retrieved May 2015 from www.theguardian.com/books/2009/feb/14/aid-africa-dambisa-moyo) and Kevin Watkins (retrieved May 2015 from www.huffingtonpost.com/kevin-watkins/why-idead-aidi-is-dead-wr_b_191193.html).
- 12 Biographical information retrieved May 2015 from https://prabook.com/web/zakia_hamdani_meghji/429033.
- 13 Biographical information drawn from sources linked to Wikipedia: two 2014 Reuters articles on appointment of Saada Mukya Salum as Tanzania's minister of finance, retrieved May 2015 from <https://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL6N0RU14N20141001> and <https://live.worldbank.org/experts/saada-mkuya-salum>
- 14 Akerele (2012), her autobiography, is the source for biography facts.
- 15 Biographical information is from Johnson (2013).
- 16 For Gloria Nikoi's career time line see www.guide2womenleaders.com/Ghana.htm.
- 17 Biographical information retrieved May 2015 from www.wisewomenawardsng.org/prof-mrs-olufunmilayo-oloruntimehin/ and <https://blerf.org/index.php/biography/oloruntimehin-professor-olufunmilayo-yetunde/>. Note: her birth year is different across these two sources.
- 18 Biographical information drawn from Okonjo-Iweala (2012).
- 19 The government of President Buhari, which took office in 2015, also had a woman as finance minister, an accountant rather than an economist.
- 20 See Scully (2016). Biographical information is also from Sirleaf (2009).

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