

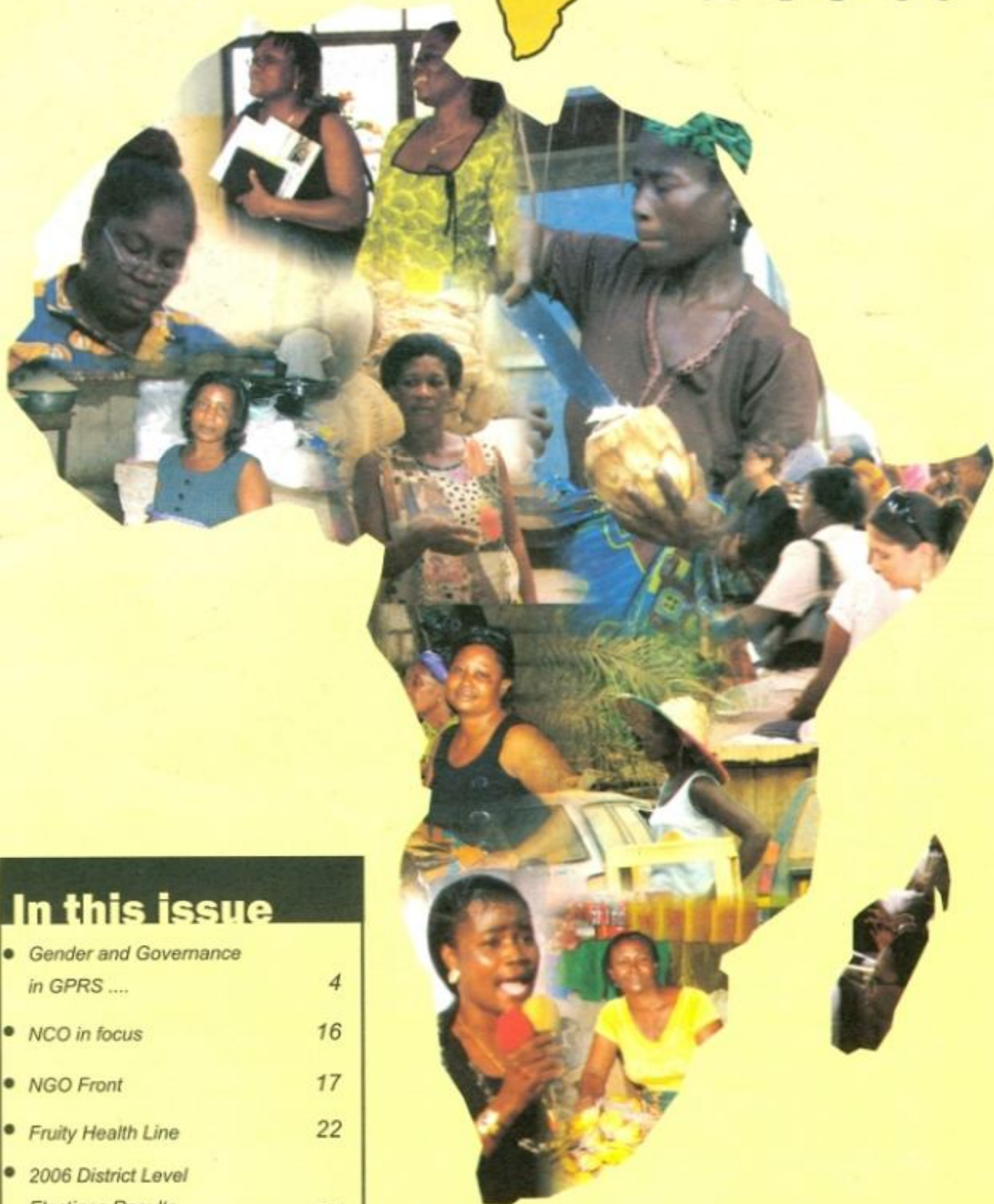
# ABANTU

ABANTU  
FOR DEVELOPMENT

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# News




## In this issue

- *Gender and Governance  
in GPRS ....* 4
- *NCO in focus* 16
- *NGO Front* 17
- *Fruity Health Line* 22
- *2006 District Level  
Elections Results* 23

# Women and Men Working together for Development . . . that's ABANTU's goal

**A**BANTU for Development is an international NGO established in 1991 by African women based in Europe. It has offices in the UK, Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria. The organisation was set up to increase women's participation in decision-making and policy influencing. It seeks to strengthen NGOs to be more effective actors in the policy-making processes in their countries. It does this through research about women's experiences and participation in policy making, training and advice for organisational strengthening and information on mobilising resources. It runs training workshops for NGOs entitled 'Enhancing Capacities for Engaging with National Policies from a Gender Perspective'.

A key strategy of ABANTU's work is to increase the number of African women trainers who are skilled in gender and policy analysis and in participative training methodologies. ABANTU has therefore trained more than 150 trainers in Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana and the UK.

ABANTU trains policy-makers to understand the gender-implications of their policies. The organisation has also worked on monitoring African governments' commitments to women. In collaboration with the African Centre for Women at the UN Economic Commission for Africa, ABANTU produced tools and guidelines for developing National Action Plans for the implementation of the Platforms for Action and for monitoring and evaluating government implementation. The tools were tested at a sub-regional conference and workshop in Dakar, Senegal in November 1997. The conference was facilitated by ABANTU and attended by over 100 policy-makers and NGO representatives. 

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# EDITORIAL

**D**iscussions of poverty is high on the agenda of many political and social actors the world over. In the West African sub-region where civil strife and conflicts have affected a significant number of countries, poverty has been identified both as a cause and consequence of conflict.

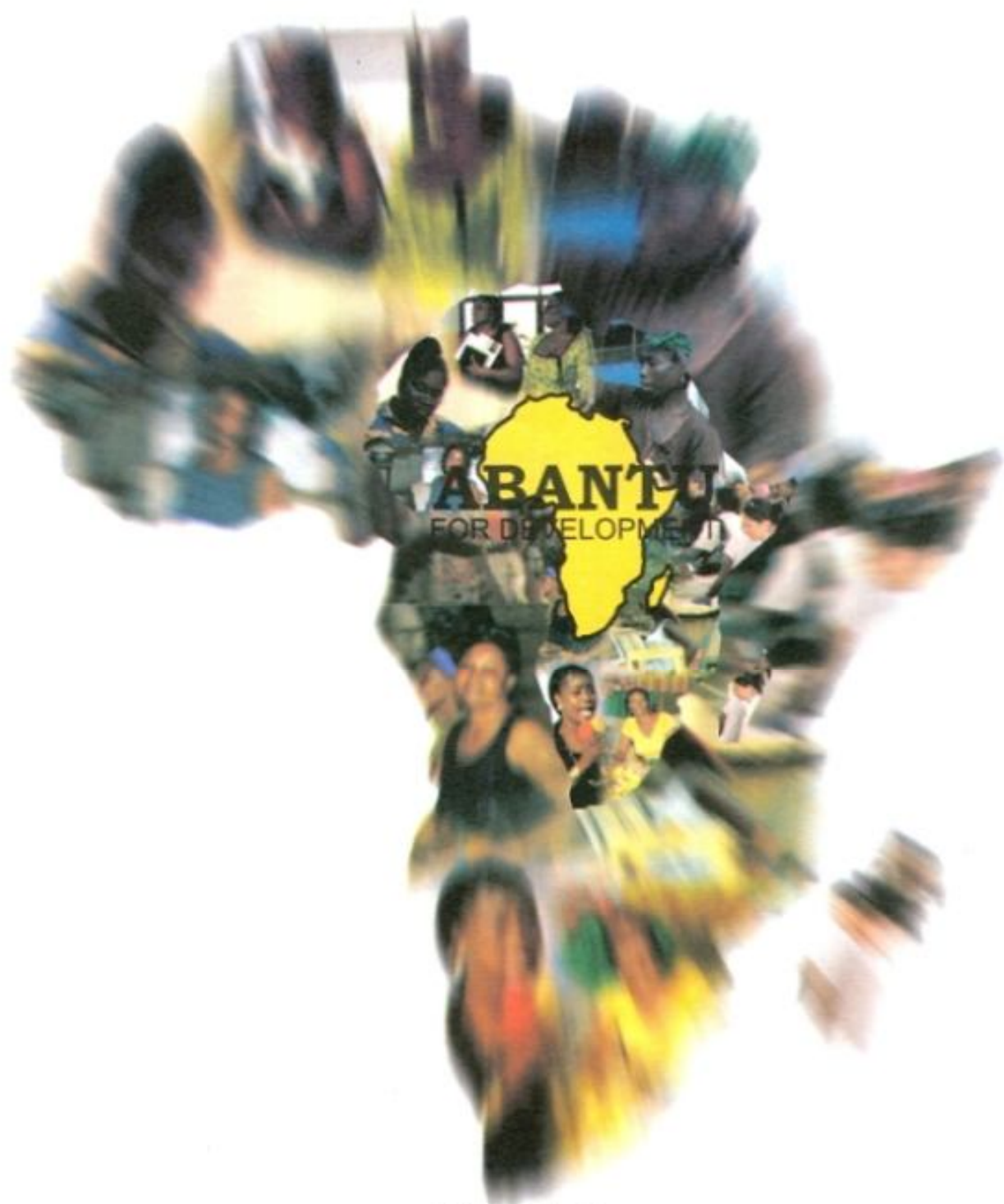
Poverty with all its multi-faceted dimensions is gendered and in situations of extreme gender inequalities where women are deprived of education, economic opportunities, participation in decision-making and reproductive rights, they are much more likely to suffer from the multi-dimensional incidence of poverty. Indeed many of the stories in this issue of ABANTU News point to the many hardships women and children have to contend with including inability to have a decent meal a day, inability to pay school fees and lack of access to good drinking water.

Under a human rights framework, governments have primary responsibility for establishing equitable laws and systems that allow women and men to exercise and enjoy their rights and to seek judicial recourse for violations, under the protection of legal systems. But in spite of the many policy recommendations that have been arrived at different fora from the local to the national and regional through to the international levels it is obvious that the fight to eradicate poverty is far from being won. Available data from The Social Watch Report of 2006 indicate that a disturbingly high proportion of countries will not attain the objective of the first Millennium Development Goal, which is to reduce the percentage of the population living in extreme poverty by half between 1990 and 2015. Indeed the report reveals that leaving India and China out, the number of poor people in the world has not reduced but has actually increased. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, there are 34 million more under nourished people than there were at the beginning of 1990. In countries where poor climatic conditions and armed conflicts have occurred, cases of food insecurity has worsened with dire consequences for the nutritional and health status of mothers and children.

Apart from health, education is also seen as a key area for addressing poverty but despite its acceptance on the agendas of governments and civil society, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa are still struggling to eradicate illiteracy. Of the ten countries with the highest illiteracy rates, eight are in sub-Saharan Africa. Of these six (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Senegal, Benin) are in the West African sub-region.

Due to the existence of socio-cultural and economic barriers to the advancement of women, girl children suffer most from these situations. Some progress has been made since 1994 the area of health and with specific reference to reproductive and sexual health services. These include the adoption of the idea and practice of reproductive health, broadening programmes to reach more people who need these services, integration of family planning services into pre- and post-natal care, childbirth attendance services and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDs.

Given that women and girls children suffer most from all of the above manifestations of poverty, it is important to recognise that a system of gender relations exist in all societies that work to generate social inequalities between women and men. This recognition will ensure that policies and programmes are institutionalised to address these inequalities. A starting point will be to utilise those frameworks produced by UN institutions such as UNCTAD and the UN Commission on the Status of Women as well as others by civil society groups such as the Social Watch Coalitions that emphasise the need to eradicate poverty across the length and breadth of the world as an expression on of commitment to global wellbeing, social justice and gender equality and equity. Women's own voices in articulating their experience of poverty is critical in any discussion about policy and programme implementation. We are convinced that the women's movement in Ghana will continue to work hard to ensure that their constituency, women have their agendas on the table so that the different forms of inequalities they face can be addressed to benefit future generations.



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