The aim of this paper is to examine and analyse the political role and strategies of the women’s movement in Zambia. In particular, the aim is through two specific case studies - the Oasis Forum and the co-operation with the traditional leadership - to understand and identify factors, which both enable and constrain women’s political agency and shape its particular nature. The topic is approached from the perspective of gendered social movement theory, as one finds, it is attentive to the specific gender dynamics that shape women’s mobilisation and interest articulation. The gendered collective of the social movement theory has to, however, be theorised in a manner that recognises the import of individual agency. In this case it also needs to be situated in the context of an African post-colonial nation - a fact that has some necessary further implications upon both the theory and the empirical analysis. The central argument of this study maintains that the Zambian NGO women have succeeded in transforming the formerly welfare-centred NGO space into an effective site from which to make political claims on authorities. This is allowed by the development of a strategy, which is tied to the emergence of certain political opportunity structures that the women have perceived in gendered terms and have been able to use for their specific ambitions, as well as the strategy based on alliance-building and networking. Thus, as opposed to studies that emphasise autonomy as the principal strategic element of the women’s movements, in Zambia networking and/or alliance building appears to prevail. Finally, with regards to the content of the women’s movement activities, it is argued, that a distinct form of politics is being applied, allowing for the fine balancing act used to discipline the interests of various societal actors all playing a crucial part in making the vision of the women’s movement to become a reality. Research for this thesis was conducted by using a qualitative methodology. Specific research methods employed were the semi-structured interview and observation. A considerable amount of secondary material, in the form of newspaper articles and reports, was also collected.

Avainsanat-Nyckelord: social movements - women's movements - Zambia feminism - Africa women - politics

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