

IUSSP Scientific Panel on Gender

International Seminar on Gender and Empowerment in the 21st century in Africa

Nairobi, Kenya, 24-25 August 2009

REPORT

The IUSSP Scientific Panel on Gender, in collaboration with the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) organized a seminar on “Gender and empowerment in the 21st Century in Africa.” The seminar brought together researchers, policy makers, programme managers, and other development partners to share experiences on innovative policies and programmes that have pushed the region forward in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment in some countries, as well as highlight experiences that have undermined such efforts in other settings. The Seminar was hosted by the African Population and Health Research Center and funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The meeting brought together 63 participants and 25 papers were presented.

Summary of issues presented at meeting

The objective of the seminar was to stimulate and advance research, policy and programmes to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. Papers presented at the seminar were diverse in their disciplines as well as areas of focus. A wide range of papers addressed theoretical and methodological issues while others presented empirical case studies, or analysed policy or program gaps on gender equality and women’s empowerment. Although a majority of the papers focused on Africa, there were also papers from other regions such as Asia for comparative insights. Substantive areas covered by the papers included methodological and measurement issues, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, civil/armed conflicts (including sexual and gender based violence), political participation and the labour market participation, (including access to resources, poverty and education).

Presenters at the seminar highlighted the need to revisit the meaning and measurements of gender. They emphasized the need for greater care about the framing of questions and discourse on gender and the need to move away from gender stereotypes and the portrayal of women as victims and men as perpetrators all the time. It underscored the need for public health discourse to embrace a new notion of women that considers their different positionalities in society. They called for theories of masculinities to be integrated in gender research so as to fully understand how experiences of inequities among men impact on the lives of women. The link between the local and the global has to be investigated especially in situations of war where local and global interests intersect, usually with dire consequences for women and men who are caught up in such conflicts. Both individual and structural factors are important in understanding women’s empowerment and researchers should not privilege one over the other. However, such an approach should not ignore historical and current gender inequities across African societies.

Women’s participation in both formal and informal politics and the various restrictions that can prevent women from full participation in electoral politics were discussed. In some societies women may create spaces for political participation in ways that are less threatening to themselves while at the same time exploiting some cultural resources to gain advantages

and better their lives. However, these forms of protests are met with varying degrees of success and may not significantly challenge structures that have negative gender implications for women. Some papers also addressed the issue of women empowerment at the grassroots levels and how we can incorporate some cultural and traditional practices to advance women's empowerment. What was apparent in this session was the need to analyse development because if not properly planned development may lead to further disempowerment of women. Sometimes women are not strategically placed to take advantage of development to better their own situation.

The seminar acknowledged men's increasing vulnerability but underscored the need to privilege women's gender issues as men continue to draw privileges from the patriarchal advantage.

Session 1: Keynote Addresses

The papers and speeches in this session highlighted the slow progress towards achieving MDG3 in Africa. Although progress has been made in some respects, some areas are still lagging behind. There has been low progress around issues of gender representation in political processes. For instance the number of women parliamentarians is still very low in some countries. Women are still disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS and gender violence. In some countries women still have limited access to productive resources like land.

Session 2: Researching Gender – Methodological Issues

This session focused on ways to study women and gender issues in meaningful ways. Suggested ways included using mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative); exploring the role of space physical geography and mapping in gendered processes as well as interrogating the way our experiences as researchers can affect the way we ask questions and the issues we seek to problematise.

Session 3: Gender and Public Health Issues

This session highlighted the need to investigate women as agents and emphasized the need for cross disciplinary perspectives. This session spoke to the need for a new image of woman in the public health discourse if public health interventions are to have an impact.

Session 4: Politics and Violence

This session discussed women's participation in both formal and informal politics and the various restrictions that can prevent women from full participation in electoral politics. In some societies women may create spaces or political participation in ways that are less threatening to themselves at the same time exploiting some cultural resources that determine their roles as women.

Session 5: Fertility and Gender

The session discussed issues related to unmet need for both men and women in terms of contraception and desired number of children. It was agreed that in many sub-Saharan African countries research focuses on unmet need where the couples are in disagreement but not when couples are agreeing. It was apparent that there is need for intense studies because Jensen's study showed that it appeared women in Kwale (Kenya) were controlling their fertility because they were having fewer children. However the study proceeds to show that these women were operating at sub-fecundity level even if they would have wanted to have more children. Thus other factors may be at play. There is a great need to look at hidden mechanisms that drive fertility. It was highlighted that in the face of increased mortality due

to HIV/AIDS we need to investigate what impact this is going to have on fertility. It emerged in the discussions that when investigating fertility there may also be a need to go beyond personal choices to community or family contributions and other societal dynamics that affect the decision of number of children for couples.

Session 6: Poverty, Gender and Employment

This session focused on the need to interrogate certain development discourses and see how they can both benefit and disadvantage women. The papers in this session stress the problematic of a time of heightened economic changes, characterised by stagnating agriculture, economic reforms and unfair terms of trade. This is all happening at a time when welfare systems are being displaced. This has negative effect on women's participation in the economic arena. Some papers in this session also address the issue of women empowerment at the grassroots level and how we can incorporate some cultural traditional practices to advance women's empowerment. What was apparent in this session was the need to unpack development because if not properly planned development may lead to further disempowerment of women. Sometimes women are also not strategically placed to take advantage of development to better their own situation.

Session 7: Education and Gender

This session discussed the empowerment potential of education from primary level education through secondary to university level. This session showed that the level and kind of education people get has a huge implication in labour force participation. As a result of differential school socialization for boys and girls, girls may not be able to compete effectively in the labour market at the same level as boys. This session advocated for an education system that has emancipation potential for women and that opens the doors for women to participate competitively on the labour market.

Session 8: Setting Priorities

Focusing on research, Alex Ezeh emphasized 5 points: (1) Researchers should use appropriate definitions and measures; (2) It is important to contextualize research; (3) Although patriarchy disadvantages women, we should unpack patriarchy and identify those situations where it can be favourable or disadvantageous to women; (4) There is a need to interrogate how researchers can account for different positionalities and how this can be leveraged to empower women; (5) There is a need to address the issue of whether or not gender studies should privilege women. Although men's issues should be studied, he pointed out that in some cases it may be critical to prioritise women's issues. For example in conflict issues privileging women's experiences may make better sense.

Charles Okigbo focused on the link between research and policy. He emphasized the following: (1) Research results should be used for policy making; (2) Researchers should involve the researched population to come up with solutions to their problems; (3) Researchers have to adopt a continual approach to policy making; (4) There is a need for researchers to network with likeminded people.

Stella Maranga talked about the link between research and programming. She emphasized the importance of research that feeds into programmes. Stella also pointed out that there is need to explore the theory and concept of gender mainstreaming. She pointed out that it is not yet time to say men are marginalized since even the resources that target women are not going to women. Research should help program implementers with ideas and ways of involving women in meaningful ways.

Emerging themes

Research

- (a) Researchers should increasingly adopt mixed methods instead of regarding methodologies as if they are discreet.
- (b) The need to link research on gender to the larger socio-economic structures was emphasized. Researchers should move from just capturing individual characteristics because we may miss a lot of what is happening at the community level that may also impact on women's empowerment as a group.
- (c) There is a need to involve African academic researchers in research instead of always pursuing research agendas from the North.
- (d) There is a need to incorporate the role of masculinities in transactional sex, premarital and extramarital sexual relationships. Men may be bread winners in other types of relationships as well.
- (e) The penis should be studied and interrogated as a weapon of war.
- (f) Researchers should be willing to interrogate their research findings. For example they should be willing to dig deeper into findings such as investigating the processes that are going on behind numbers they may come up with. For instance, it may not be enough to say boys are now disempowered because the number of boys going to university has decreased compared to girls. It may be worthwhile to ask who these boys that are not going to University are. Is it because other occupations and activities have become more useful than attending school?
- (g) Researchers should pay interest to silences as sometimes what people do not say is as important as what they say.
- (h) Researchers should not equate gender equity to gender equality at the same time they should also not equate sex to gender.

Programmes

- (a) Just adding women to existing programmes does not work to empower them. At the same time there is a need to define ways that men can be involved in projects to empower women.
- (b) We should link the various processes of development to gender. Both men and women are suffering from larger structures. Is there an alternative to men's sense of powerlessness in the face of women's empowerment? At the same time men have made repeated attempts to recreate patriarchy in ways that try to subordinate women.
- (c) For sustainability of the women's movement there is a need to build capacity of women and other gender advocates.

Policy

- (a) Women's work should be valued and evaluated in economic terms. Valuing women's work such as care-giving in economic terms will help policy makers understand the contribution women are making.
- (b) Some health interventions can take away resources from women's issues. For instance the focus on male circumcision has disadvantaged women's health issues as huge resources are being poured into this. So policy makers should take care that by advancing certain policy positions they are disadvantaging women's issues by reallocating resources in ways that are not favourable to women.
- (c) Policies should also be targeted towards improving women's human capital to improve the quality of their participation in the labour force.

Recommendations:

The meeting led to the following recommendations:

1. Gender research should be based on mixed methods and a reconceptualisation of gender and empowerment terminology

- (a) We should define concepts and choose appropriate methodologies.
- (b) Researchers should adopt mixed methods to understand gender issues holistically. For example, where purely statistical approaches may give us the extent of the problem being studied, ethnographic frameworks may assist researchers to understand the variable meaning that actors give to certain actions. There is no one way of investigating gender.
- (c) There is the need to come up with new definitions and measurements of gender and empowerment that are relevant to today's world. Gender and empowerment as concepts should become more refined and precise.
- (d) There is need to transform the type of data to be collected to be able to address gender issues. For instance, DHS data asks directly if one is using a specific method so if the respondent husband has had a vasectomy the respondent may be less likely to mention it.
- (e) Researchers should employ other methods such as participatory evaluation methodologies so that women can evaluate themselves.

2. There is need to investigate both micro and macro level structures and how they relate to gender empowerment

- (a) Since men and women are both suffering under the burden of larger structures, there is great need to interrogate inequalities among men as these inequalities can also have an impact on what happens in the lives of women. Male gender issues need to be addressed in the same way as we address women's issues. In order to empower women and redress gender inequalities there is a need to 'walk on two legs'.
- (b) Development processes that take place at the macro level can have undesirable impacts on women's empowerment and welfare. Therefore development needs to be interrogated and instead of simply assuming that development will be good for both men and women.
- (c) By focusing solely on women issues there is a tendency to neglect national and international development that may further disadvantage women. The link between the local and the global has to be investigated especially in situations of war where local and global interests intersect usually with dire consequences for women and men who are caught up in such conflicts.

3. Researchers should explore new research methodologies that empower the study populations

- (a) Researchers should increasingly make use of research methodologies that make a difference in the lives of people that are being studied. There is a need for simultaneous research and action to ensure that research positively impacts on the lives of the researched people. There is a need for more participatory and action research to make a difference in the lives of people.
- (b) At every stage of the research process researchers need to ask themselves if the kind of questions they are asking and the research process and the findings will make a difference in the lives of the researched population.

4. Women's experiences should be privileged

- (a) Researchers and other practitioners should ground empowerment from a gender perspective that is female. Female gender experiences should be privileged because men have always been privileged. Men's situation cannot be regarded as equal to that of women. Women as a group are disempowered. There is need to interrogate the importance of the penis in male decision making.

5. There is a need to avoid stereotypical images of the African woman and African man.

- (a) Researchers have to be careful about the questions they ask and research should move away from gender stereotypes and stop portraying women as victims and men as perpetrators all the time. Women's agency, class issues and socio-economic change have been overlooked in research projects that portray women as victims. Western male and female opposition results in a mental block that prevents researchers from critically investigating gender relations.
- (b) Researchers should acknowledge that men are not equal so theories of masculinities have to be integrated into gender work so as to also study inequalities among men, which also impact on the lives of women.
- (c) When conducting research we should reject binary oppositions between men and women. Men and women also have common interests, it might be better to start from these common interests to foster cooperation between men and women.
- (d) We should investigate the other side of patriarchy, seeing that Western approaches have failed to empower women.
- (e) Researchers should also note that contexts are not translatable and should bear this in mind before making unwarranted conclusions about all African men and women.
- (f) There is a need for men to be targeted in various contexts. For example in Islamic societies we may not expect the subdued people to stand up for their rights especially if they are not given space to air their views and disappointments.

6. Possible areas of research

- (a) There is a need to investigate the role of the body. For example, by defiling the body of a woman, the whole community is also defiled. The body is a place where culture is written. There is a need for more research on this issue.
- (b) There is a need to focus on climate change issues as deaths due to climate changes have exposed women's vulnerability as opposed to men.

7. Research should have policy impact

- (a) Researchers should investigate how to reproduce success stories and policies elsewhere.
- (b) The results of research should have clear policy implications for the improvement of gender equality. Researchers should network with others of similar mind in order to influence the policy agenda.



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PROGRAMME

Monday 24 August 2009

Introduction and Keynote speakers

Session Chair: Nisha (Deputy Regional Programme Director
UNIFEM Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa)

Welcome and Introduction: Dr Alex Ezeh

Conference Opening: Speech by HON Esther Murugi Mathenge, MP. The Minister of Gender and Children Affairs.

1st Keynote:

Prof. Akosua Adomako Ampofo

If he's the Man on Top is she the Naughty Girl? Changing meanings and measurement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

2nd Keynote

Prof. Silberschmidt (University of Copenhagen)

How to achieve gender equality and empower African women when men are increasingly disempowered?

3rd Keynote

Prof. Beth Maina Ahlberg, Anne Kubai, Asli Kulane, Jill Trenholm, Kezia Njoroge, & Anne Kamau.

Traumatizing and traumatised masculinities: Sexual violence in war and conflict situations in Congo, Kenya and Rwanda

Discussion: Nancy Luke (Discussant)

Researching Gender Methodological Issues

Session Chair: Chimaraoke Izugbara

Enid Schatz, and Jill Williams

Understanding gender in Africa: Using qualitative methods to enhance DHS analyses of women's empowerment collection

P-J Ezeh

Patripotency and Position of Women among the Igbo of Nigeria: the Facts and the Fiction

Epifania A. Amoo-Adare

Real Agency is in Building(s)?: Women, Empowerment and Urban Space

Nixon Chisonga *Gendered access to housing in Lusaka: an ethnographic study of small scale market traders in Matero Township of Lusaka, Zambia*

Discussion: Akosua Ampofo (Discussant)

Gender and Public Health Issues

Session Chair: Caroline Kabiru

Salome Wawire *Male Circumcision and the Female Question: Do Women Benefit in the Promotion of Male Circumcision for HIV/AIDS Prevention?*

Chi-Chi Undie & Chimaraoke Izugbara: *Beyond wifedom: Public health interventions and local gender ideologies in Nigeria*

Monica A. Magadi *Understanding the gender disparity in HIV infection in sub-Saharan Africa*

Nancy Luke, Rachel Goldberg, Blessing Mberu & Eliya Zulu, *Employment, Transactional Sex, and Reproductive Health Risks among Young Women in Urban Kenya*

Discussion: An-Magritt Jensen (Discussant)

Politics and Violence

Session Chair: Stella Maranga (Gender and Governance Advisor to UNIFEM)

Martha Mutisi: *Women's Agency in confronting the impact of protracted social conflict: The Case of Women of Zimbabwe Arise*

Aderemi Suleiman AJALA: *From kitchen to the corridor of power: Yoruba women breaking through patriarchal politics in South-western Nigeria*

John Forge: *Mainstreaming Gender Empowerment: Facing the Politics and Challenges of Empowerment and Disempowerment (Cameroun)*

Sofiane BOUHDIBA *Sexual Emancipation and Violence against women in the XXIst century: The case of Muslim Africa*

Discussion: Prof. Silberschmidt discussant (Discussant)

Tuesday 25 August 2009

Fertility and Gender

Session Chair: Wanjiku Khamasi

Vezumuzi Ndlovu: *Women on top? Exploring reproductive decision making among couples with HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe*

Akinrinola Bankole and Suzette Audam: *Fertility Preferences and Contraceptive Use among Couples in Sub-Saharan Africa*

An-Magritt Jensen Professor *Does gender impact sustained high fertility in Kenya? Exploring recent fertility development through case studies in Bungoma, Western and Kwale, Coast Provinces*

Discussion: Enid Schatz (Discussant)

Poverty Gender and Employment

Session Chair: Salome Wawire

Prosper Asima: *Breadwinning and the household: Gendered diasporic choices and mobility in the labour market*

Rekha Mehra, Priya Nanda, Jennifer Schulte, Charles Ashbaugh, Manveen Kohli, Kim Ashburn, Aslihan Kes *Evaluating Microfinance for Poverty Reduction and Women's Empowerment*

Jonathan Mafukidze *The implication of tradition, locality and mobility on access: narratives and experiences of rural women of Mbire*

Sumit Mazumdar & M. Guruswamy *Does High Social Development Guarantee Economic Opportunities For Women? Gender and Workforce Participation in Kerala.*

GUO Wei & YANG Cun *Women's Changing Participation in the Labor Force: Empirical Evidence from China*

Discussion: Prof. Beth Maina Ahlberg (Discussant)

Education and Gender

Session Chair: Martha Mutisi

Kehinde Ajayi *Gender and Demand for Schooling: Lessons from School Choice and Student Placement in Ghana*

Jeylan Wolyie Hussein, *Female students' expectations about the empowering role of education and educational processes*

Ekuri Emmanuel Etta Asuquo, Patrick Nyong, Ekanen, Robito Samuel, Omoogun, Ajayi *Effect of sex-group composition in cooperative learning classrooms on science concept attainment among female secondary school students in Calabar-Nigeria*

Discussion: Moses Oketch (Discussant)

Final Plenary session: Setting priorities

Research (Speaker Alex Ezeh)

Policy (Speaker Charles Okigbo)

Programs - (Speaker Stella Maranga - UNIFEM)

List of Participants

1. Aderemi Suleiman Ajala , Gorg Forster Fellow of Alexander Von Humboldt Foundation, Universitat Mainz
2. Prosper Asima, Ford Foundation Fellow and doctoral candidate in Migration Studies at the Sussex Center for Migration Research (SCMR), University of Sussex
3. Bouhdipa Sofiane, Professor University of Tunis
4. Nixon Chisonga, PhD candidate, Center for Social Science Research, University of Capetown
5. Netsayi N Mudege , Associate Research Scientist, African Population and Health research Center
6. Peter-Jazzy Ezeh, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Nigeria
7. Ekuri Emmanuel Etta, Department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar, Nigeria
8. Guo Wei, PhD candidate (Demography) Peking University, China
9. Jeylan Wolyie Hussein Faculty of Education, Haramaya University Ethiopia
10. John W Forge, Department of Political Science, University of Yaoundé Cameroon
11. Kehinde Ajayi, Phd candidate, Department of Economics, University of California
12. Monica Magadi, Senior Lecturer, department of Sociology, City University, London
13. Martha Mutisi PhD Candidate, George Mason University and lecturer in the Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance at Africa University, Zimbabwe
14. Salome Wawire, PhD candidate in Anthropology at Brown University
15. Jonathan Mafukidze, Human Sciences research Council, Pretoria South Africa
16. Sumit Mazumdar, Research Consultant, Center for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta
17. Beth Wangeci Maina Ahlberg, Professor, Department of Women and Children's Health, Uppsala University and Skaraborg Institute for Research and Development.
18. Margrethe Silberschmidt, Professor, Department of General practice Section of Women and Gender, University of Copenhagen
19. Nancy Luke, Department of Sociology, Brown University
20. Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Associate Professor, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana
21. An-Magritt Jensen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
22. Akinrinola Bankole, Guttmacher Institue
23. Alex Ezeh, Executive Director, African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi, Kenya
24. Enid Schazt, University of Missouri
25. Jennifer Schulte, Gender and Livelihoods Specialist, International Center for Research on Women
26. Chi-Chi Undie, Population Council, Nairobi, Kenya
27. Chimaraoke Izugbara, Research Scientist, African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi Kenya
28. Charles Okigbo, Policy Engagement and Communication, African Population and Heath Research Center, Nairobi, Kenya
29. Stella Maranga, Gender and Governance Advisor, UNIFEM, Kenya Country Office
30. Epifania Amoo Adare, Biraa Creative Initiative
31. Julia Ombasyi, Administration Department, African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi Kenya
32. James Nyikal (Dr), Permanent Secretary, Ministry of gender and children's affairs (Kenya, Nairobi)
33. Caroline Kabiru, Associate Research Scientist (APHRC)
34. Blessing Mberu, Associate Research Scientist (APHRC)
35. Moses Oketch Senior Research Scientist (APHRC)

Observers

1. Katherine Namuddu, Associate Director of the Africa regional program at the Rockefeller Foundation
2. Wanjiku Khamasi, Director, Institute of Gender Equity Research and Development, Moi University, Kenya
3. Nisha, Deputy Regional Program Director East and Horn of Africa, UNIFEM
4. Meryem Aslan, Regional Program Director East and Horn of Africa, UNIFEM
5. Emmy Kipsoi, Lecturer, department of Educational Foundations, Moi University, Kenya
6. Rachel L Karei, Lecturer Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Moi University, Kenya
7. Florence Gitau, Games tutor, Moi University
8. Lizzy Awuor, Science Africa, Nairobi Kenya
9. Ivy Kodzi, Post-Doctoral Fellow, African Population and Health Research Center
10. Henry Wonyama, Media, The Star
11. Eluid Wekesa, PhD Candidate, London School of Economics
12. Hosea Kiplagat, Moi University, Lecturer
13. Victor Raballa, Media, People's Daily
14. Venter Mwongera, Media, Nairobi Star
15. Rose Oronje, Policy Engagement and Communication, African Population and Health Research Center
16. Dennitah Ghati, Population Council, Nairobi Kenya
17. Lawrence Ochieng, Ministry of gender and children affairs, Nairobi, Kenya
18. Michelle I Buky, Media, Kenya News Agency
19. Peter M Mwariri, Media, Kenya News Agency
20. Fatuma Fugicha, Media, The Standard
21. Tabitha Otwor, Media, The Standard
22. Joyce Kinyanywi, Uwezo-Kenya
23. Maureen, Radio Africa
24. Lucas, Science Africa
25. Shadrack Kavilu, Media, Sunday Express
26. John Njenga, Freelance
27. Michael O Ouma, ASNS
28. Kisulu M Kitainge, Lecturer, Moi University Kenya