

GENDER INEQUALITY FROM WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE IN AFRICA: A MODEL RIGHT BASED METHODOLOGY

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KEYWORDS: gender, feminist theory, qualitative methods, women's rights, inequality

Background

Women in rural areas of Africa are subjected to various forms of gender-based discrimination, and remain marginalized in many spheres, including the enjoyment of economic rights. Cultural or religious norms and traditions that perpetuate their exclusion from access and control over resources adversely affect women's economic status within families and society. National and international laws enshrine principles of equality and non-discrimination, offering a range of economic, social and cultural rights for women. However, the gendered dimensions of economic inequality vigorously impede fulfillment of those rights. Among dimensions of female poverty, poor health and free expression are intertwined, but are not often linked in development. Women and girls in this areas spend long hours collecting water and firewood this and other household chores limits school attendance and work option. They remain underrepresented in decision-making processes at all levels.



These women are tilling the land for food production, there after collecting water from long distance for domestic use.

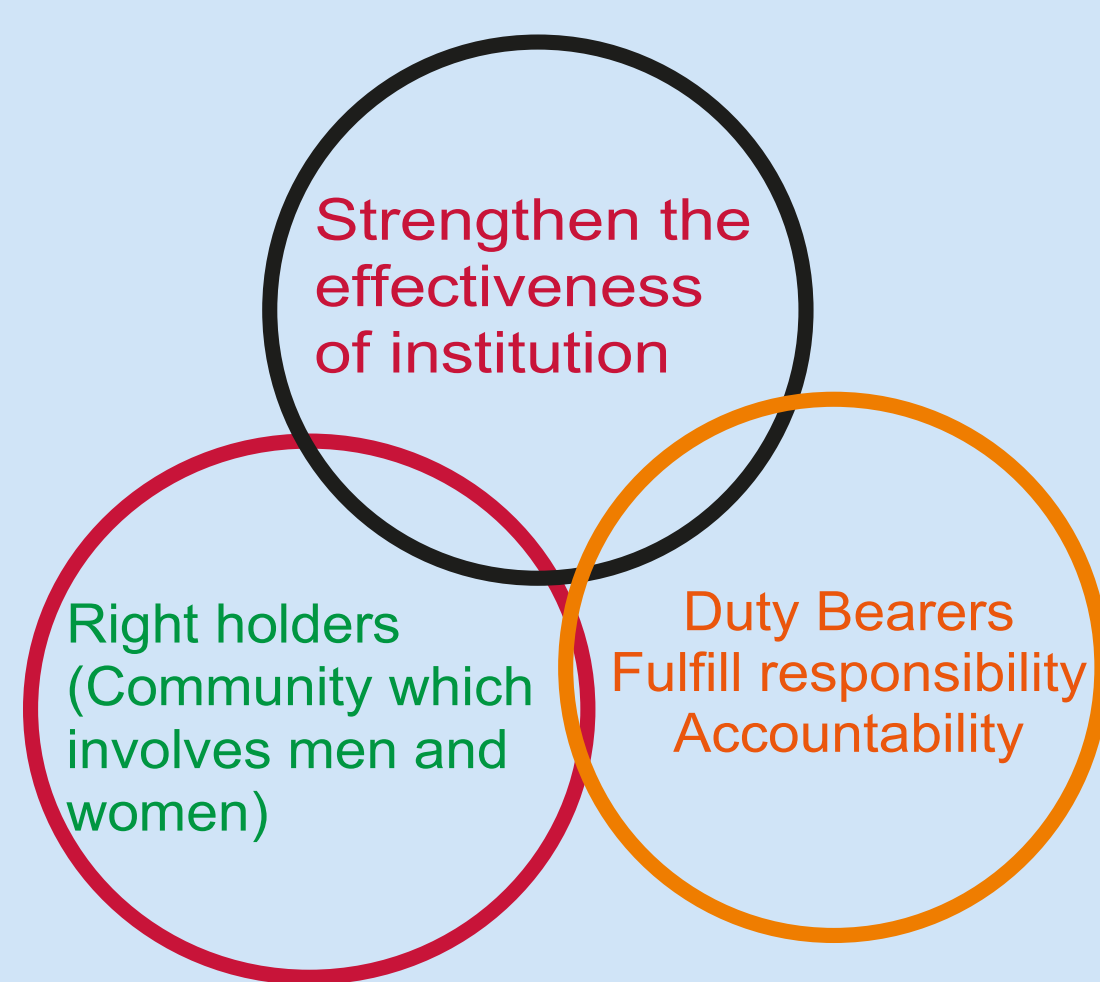
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To articulate a rights-based approach to understanding factors underpinning gender inequities in social development, including analysis of the roles of culture, education and social systems (e.g., health system, food production) against the opportunities and involvement of women in health-seeking behavior and community within an overall context of sustainable development.

METHODS

The rights-based approach is drawn from the protect-respect-fulfill model, with adaptations that emphasize active

engagement by motivated community members. Key aspects of this approach include the following: Social Protection: Social change through local actions to protect women and girls from harassment or GBV, development of life skills and assertiveness for youth, gender-positive norms for schools, rehabilitation for marginalized people and GBV survivors and access to services as well as to physical and social capital. Respect for gender: through prohibition of cultural practices that demean female equality, such as 'widow inheritance' (passing authority over a bereaved widow to her husband's brothers), politics (none participation of women in politics),



Changes in gender norms are triggered by awareness creation that engages community members (Women and Men), stakeholders, (religious leaders, teachers, village elders) duty bearers (elected leaders, chiefs, police) and the affected populations to address the underlying determinants of health, including education and information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and freedom from discrimination which seeks to transform attitudes practices and behaviors change. Examples of such techniques include awareness raising via community dramas, town gatherings for statements by local leaders and influential elders, and focus group discussions.

RESULTS

A focus on qualitative methods in participatory development and action research yields extended benefits, including the following:

- Empowerment of women, girls, men and boys as agents of gender equity, rather than mere recipients or respondents in top-down development driven by external targets;
- Clear understanding of both the factors that support gender inequities and the mechanisms that can alter the status quo, leading to equitable development;
- Local community and individual ownership of the change process, leading to long-term social development and reduction of gender inequities.
- Increase the participation of women in decision and policy making at all levels

Raising awareness on rights to equality, equity, dignity, freedom and other social, economic and cultural rights, populations will have increased knowledge, skills and confidence among the vulnerable, especially women and girls. People of all genders are awakened and motivated to challenge unequal power relations and gender inequalities, as well as harmful cultural practices that serve as a significant impediment to



focus group discussion on various issues that have effects on women

CONCLUSIONS

Qualitative evidence from female and male perspectives in Africa is an essential component in understanding factors that propagate economic and social disparities by gender, and block inclusive development. Particularly when social inequities include health, directly or through intersectionality, women are trapped in multiple dimensions of poverty that are not adequately described by quantitative data. Most importantly, qualitative evidence describes

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to address the manifest gender imbalances and respond to challenges faced by Women in Africa today;

- Explicitly make gender equality is an irreducible condition for inclusive democratic, violence-free and sustainable development.
- Make women central to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes in the political, economic and social spheres of life.
- Promote gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women, ensuring elimination of all kinds of violence against women and girls.
- Women's rights should be strongly attached to the notion of human rights and that the progress of men and women are linked to each other.



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