

Gender Issues in a Globalizing World: Rights, Representation and Substantive Freedom

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Outline of the Presentation

- **Definition of concepts**
- **Gender and human rights**
- **Gender in the context of representation and the measurement of capabilities**
- **Gender and substantive freedoms**
- **Contextualizing Gender within Human Development**
- **Gender and Development issues in Nigeria**
- **Conclusions and Recommendations**

What is Gender?

- **In a conference such as this, that brings together people of diverse backgrounds, it will be apposite to first define what is meant by the term “Gender”.**
- **The is because of the tendency for people (both academics and non-academics alike) to gender as being the promotion of women only.**
- **By contrast, gender focuses on the relationship between men and women, their roles, access to and control over resources, the comparative division of labor, their interests and needs.**
- **It is a sociological construction that has different interpretations and conceptualization in different cultures.**

Definition of Gender

- **The term “Gender” came into use in 1972 as a result of the need to refer to the social relationship between men and women**
- **It came out of a need to address the unequal differences between men and women, specifically, beyond the words used to differentiate between people (class, status, race, etc)**
- **Being referred to as “male” and “female” are sex categories, while “masculinity” and “femininity” are gender categories**
- **Sex can be seen as dichotomous variable while gender could be defined as a continuum**

Definition of Gender

- **“The relations between men and women, both perceptual and material” – FAO**
- **“The socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women” – WHO**
- **Suggested Conference Definition:
The social meaning given to the biological differences between men and women and the socially constructed relations between men and women.**

Gender and Human Rights

- **Within the context of globalization, gender has increasingly become a major human rights discourse**
- **The UN recognizes all humans as having inalienable and equal rights to opportunities - the tendency to deny those rights to women in all parts of the world is a form of human rights violation.**
- **There is a growing recognition that Human Development if not engendered is endangered**
- **Indices for measuring gender, human rights and development have emerged in the global arena.**

Equity, Justice

- **The eradication of all forms of discrimination, be they economic, social, political and cultural, is indispensable for the protection of human rights, a commitment that all governments have endorsed**
- **It is a matter of justice, fairness, equity and equal representation**
- **Most states are parties to a variety of normative documents (CEDAW, Beijing, Cairo, etc) that provide reference to specific mandates and international commitments for the protection of international commitments**
- **Governments must always be reminded of these shared values.**

Engendering Human Rights ----

- **Gender inequality exists when there is under-valuation and non-recognition of women in work**
- **Inequality is not only a problem of access to the means but a problem of freedom denied or curtailed**
- **Human Development recognizes gender discrimination in:**
 - **Freedom to enter into contractual relations and decide on property**
 - **Freedom to participate in public life and have political leadership**
 - **Freedom to receive training, enter and to compete in the labor market**
 - **Freedom to live (including the prevention of gender-based mortality)**

Gender Development Index (GDI)

- **Measures achievement in the same basic capacities as HDI, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men**
- **The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower a country's GDI compared with HDI**
- **The GDI reflects gender imbalances in basic health, education and income**

Gender Empowerment Index (GEI)

- **Examines whether women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life**
- **Three dimensions:**
 - **Economic participation and decision making as measured by the % of female administrators and managers, professionals and technical workers.**
 - **Political participation and decision making as measured by % of seats in parliament by women**
 - **Power over economic resources is measured by women's estimated earned income.**

Gender and Representation

- **Equal inclusion of men and women in all aspects of development and society pays off for the country as a whole.**
- **Nations cannot afford to ignore the contributions and economic and social capacities of both men and women in all spheres. The development of any country that does will ultimately suffer in the medium and long term.**
- **Lack of participation of women would mean that a major part of the skilled and well educated human resources would be wasted**

Gender, Reproduction and Development

- **Without the significant contribution of the reproductive labor, often generated by women, the productive sphere cannot function**
- **The empowerment of women benefits children and families. Investment in female empowerment and education increases women's productivity while decreasing fertility and infant mortality. These are development multipliers. No single factor has so much impact on so many diverse outcomes.**

Gender and substantive freedom

- **Amartya Sen argues that development is the increasing of human freedom:**
- **About expanding individual freedoms, such as**
 - **Freedoms to do what you want to do;**
 - **To be what you want to be.**
- **Freedom is at the same time the main goal and the main means of achieving development**
- **And, it is at the root of gender equity and gender equality. Without freedoms, many choices are simply not available, and many opportunities in life remain inaccessible.**

Contextualizing Gender within Human Development

Human Development encompasses simultaneously:

- **Efficiency** – Efficient use of resources and increase of their availability
- **Equity**: Distributive justice, especially for choices and opportunities
- **Freedom and empowerment**
- **Sustainability**, not just for present but for next ones too.

Assumptions and Presumptions in Human Development

- **Development aid is gender neutral, it tends to be gender blind. It assumes that men and women have the same needs so a project that is developed for increasing their overall choices automatically lead to an increase in their overall choices.**
- **Development aid and planning being gender neutral, means that it is really designed to target the majority or the visible, which often means men.**

Gender Equality in Nigeria

- **Data shows discrimination against women persists despite high national ranking on HDI. Many poor countries outperform richer countries, In terms of participation and inclusion, women fare better in Botswana, Costa Rica and Namibia than they do in Greece, Italy and Japan**
- **Countries with worse disparities between GDI and HDI values are Saudi Arabia, Oman, Nigeria, Pakistan, Yemen and India**
- **Countries that have the closest correspondence between HDI and GDI are Sweden, Denmark, Australia, Latvia and Bulgaria**

Nigeria: Gender Indicators

• Sex Ratio (m/f)	1.04
• Life Expectancy Ratio (f/m)	1.021097046
• Fertility Rate	4.73
• Income Ratio (f/m)	0.42
• Literacy Ratio (f/m)	0.8
• Tertiary enrolment ratio	0.55
• Women in parliament (in %)	6.4
• Women as Governors	0/36

Nigeria: Gender Indices

- **Human Development Index** **142/169**
- **Social Institutions and Gender Index** **86/102**
- **Gender Inequality Index** **-/138**
- **Gender Equity Index** **147/157**
- **Women's Economic Opportunity Index** **99/134**
- **Global Gender Gap Index** **118/134**

Some unresolved gender inequality issues in Nigeria

- **Early marriage**
- **Polygamy, inheritance, widowhood rites, etc**
- **Violence against women**
- **Female genital mutilation, etc**
- **Maternal mortality**
- **Ownership rights**

Gender and rights – still nascent in Nigeria

- **Although Nigeria ratified the main international and regional women's rights protection instruments, discrimination against women persists widely both in law and practice. The Coalition of the Campaign is concerned that 25 years since Nigeria's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the government has failed to adopt a law to allow CEDAW to be invoked before Nigerian courts**
- **There is persisting violations of women's rights as epitomized by:**
 - **Persistence of discriminatory laws**
 - **Lack of harmonization between statutory and customary laws**
 - **The application of Sharia laws in northern states**
 - **Violence against women**
 - **Lack of access to decision-making positions, etc**

Gender Perspectives in Health

- **Gender is an important issue to consider in the provision of health care in order to ensure social justice and equity**
- **Although both sexes have their individual health problems, overall, women are more susceptible to inequity in health care provision and utilization**
- **Mortality rates may be lower in women than men in most countries, and life expectancy is often higher in women, but this masks the gender imbalance that exists in several indices of health care**

The Concept of Gender and Illness Vulnerability

- **Biological Vulnerability**
- **Physical Vulnerability**
- **Socio-economic Vulnerability**

Biological Vulnerability

- Female only diseases are breast, cervical cancer and maternal mortality, etc.
- Male only diseases are prostate cancer etc
- However, women are more vulnerable to mutual diseases such as HIV/AIDs, while men are more vulnerable to trauma and accidents (gunshot wounds, Assassinations, kidnapping, etc)
- Female circumcision is harmful while male circumcision is not

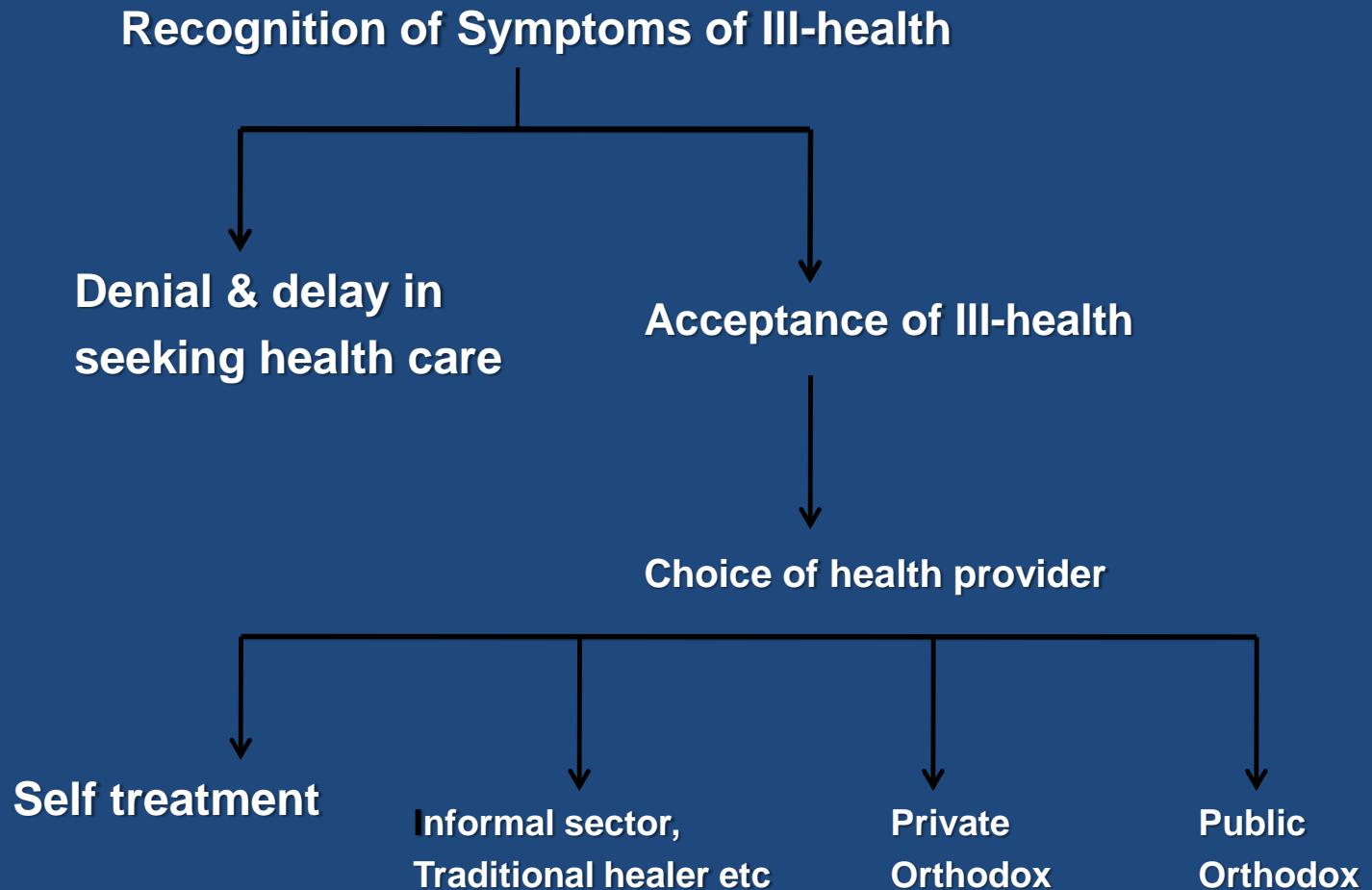
Physical Vulnerability

- **Women are more vulnerable when natural disasters occur e.g. earthquakes, Tsunamis etc**
- **Women were the main victims of the Jos massacre that took place recently**
- **Women are also more vulnerable to physical assaults such as rape, gender-based violence (GBV), Domestic Violence, etc**

Socio-economic Vulnerability

- **Poverty and women's low economic status**
- **Women have low decision-making power**
- **Less political power place women in little position to negotiate their health**
- **Religious and cultural interpretations may endorse women's inferior status and subordinate their health status**
- **Men tend to be better educated than women about all issues, including health issues**

Steps in Interpretation of Ill-health Determinants of Health Care Utilization



Effects of Gender on Health Care Utilization

- **Although women are more likely to recognize symptoms of ill-health, they are more likely than men to delay treatment**
- **Women are more likely to seek self treatment, peer treatment or informal sector treatment, rather than orthodox treatment**
- **A woman's role as a care giver comes before her own needs**

Factors Associated with Gender Disparity in Health Care Utilization

- **Poverty – the feminization of poverty**
- **Decision-making Power: Women often need the consent of their husbands to access health care**
- **Shame and stigmatization – more likely to affect women**
- **Ignorance and illiteracy**

Some Stigmatizing Diseases

- Sexually Transmitted Diseases, including HIV/AIDs
- Obstetrics Fistula
- Infertility
- Domestic violence, including rape
- Leprosy and skin diseases
- Epilepsy
- Mental illness

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Health Services – A last resort for women

- **Health costs can be prohibitive**
- **Hospital facilities are often socially and culturally insensitive to women**
- **Hospitals are often frightening to rural women**
- **Health services are often inadequate**
- **Poor and illiterate women are often at a disadvantage**

Conventions that address women's health vulnerability

- **International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), 1994**
- **Fifth World Conference on Women, 1995**
- **Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**
- **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 2000**

The UN Millennium Development Goals

- 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
- 2 Achieve universal primary education**
- 3 Promote gender equality and empower women**
- 4 Reduce child mortality**
- 5 Improve maternal health**
- 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**
- 7 Ensure environmental sustainability**
- 8 Develop a global partnership for development**

Gender, MDG Goals and Health

- **The MDGs are 8 goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main developmental challenges**
- **Of the 8 goals, three (Goals 4, 5, & 6) specifically address issues related to women's health**
- **One goal (Goal 3) is devoted to promoting gender equity and the empowerment of women**
- **Goals 1, 2 & 8 have indirect effects on health, gender and development**

The MDGs

- **Synthesize in a single package many of the most important commitments made separately at the international conferences and summits of the 1990s**
- **Recognize explicitly the interdependence between growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development; and**
- **Acknowledge that development rests on the foundations of democratic governance, the rule of law, gender equity, respect for human rights, peace and security, and social justice**

Promoting Gender Equity in Health

Obtain Health disaggregated data



Identify socio-cultural factors which promote gender inequality in health



Advocacy to promote gender equity, especially women-led advocacy

Promoting Gender Equity in Health

- Increase in women's education and health literacy
- Socio-economic and political empowerment of women e.g. micro-credits, affirmative action on political appointments, etc
- Health safety nets, such as free maternal health services
- Public health education

Conclusion

- **Gender is an important and critical determinant of the poor health outcomes in many developing countries**
- **Ensuring gender equity in the provision of health care is an important unmet need in the pursuit of human rights and social justice**
- **Promoting gender equity in health will be one of the most important challenge facing development in the coming decade.**

This conference will hopefully provide an opportunity to deepen the understanding of the challenge of gender inequality in Nigeria, and enable the development of appropriate recommendations going forward

Thank You !

