

“REIMAGINING THE FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 30 YEARS”

A KEYNOTE ADDRESS PRESENTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GENDER
STUDIES IN AFRICA ICGSA ON 23RD TO 25TH FEBRUARY, 2022

By

Commissioner: **Dr. Nyepudzayi Mercy Nyangulu (PhD)**

INTRODUCTION:

My hearty Congratulations to The Vice Chancellor of Makerere University Professor Barnabas Nawangwe, The Dean of The School of Gender Studies Professor Sarah Ssali, Staff and Students for your 30th Anniversary. My organization that I founded and chair, The Women in Management Business and Development (WIMBD) TRUST of Zimbabwe is also turning 30 years on 27th October, 2022. You can see why I was so keen to be here to celebrate with you this very joyous occasion and history making Event. WIMBD TRUST Membership is joining me in saying “WELL DONE”

I am also bringing congratulatory message of joy from The Women of Africa Arise (WAA) Chairperson Mrs. Beatrice Hackula, The Southern Africa Region for which I am a Gender Champion and All Sisters in WAA. We are indeed saying “WELL DONE”

WAA was born out of Covid 19 Lockdowns as an initiative to do something as Women of Africa in response to the pandemic. It has grown in the two years to embrace women of all walks of life of Africa and beyond. It has become a very formidable and vibrant Network for information, participation and Sisterhood.

My presentation will look at Gender definition, approaches to gender work, conventions and protocols, the strides that have been made, the gaps, new global challenges and propose future initiatives to deal with these challenges in the next three decades ahead.

DEFINATION OF GENDER

Gender relates to prescribed roles and expectations for males and females by a given society. It is culture specific, and are learnt individually or negotiated. It is dynamic and depends on geographical location.

These prescribed roles are often trivialized by patriarchal beliefs which do not value women's work, effort and status in society. This has put women in a subordinate position. Hence the need to address women's disadvantages through Affirmative Action and demystifying the myth that gender is about women.

Gender is about both men and women, boys and girls.

Socialization plays a very critical role in shaping thinking about gender roles.

Here I can share my story. I had a Christian upbringing by my late parents (Sekuru Enock Jeke and Ambuya Rhoda Hodzi) who were very gender sensitive and gave both my three brothers and my sister and I equal opportunity to go to school. From a very young age I saw no gender and no colour. To me people are people. I won a scholarship at 18 years of age to travel and study abroad. That was the first time I had an opportunity to land here at Entebbe Airport to refuel enroute to West Africa and onto The United States in 1969. I, therefore, experienced the world at a very tender age and have been shaped into the kind of person I am today by it.

I am very delighted to once again land here and actually come out of the plane and spend this week with you.

In the Work World, I have seen males as colleagues and tried my best to excel only to discover the hurdles of male dominance.

Luckily for me I met and married a very gentle, professional and very gender sensitive husband Advocate Vanani Simon Nyangulu (whose name I carry). I owe to him my excelling academically. Together we have had and raised a gender sensitive family of six.

My passion for this work comes from the desire to help other women and girls to reach their full potential regardless of what society has assigned to them. Also, that once they make it, they should realize that they have a constituency of the many women whose voices can be heard through them.

THE APPROACHES TO GENDER WORK OVER TIME:

Over the years development programs have been criticized for ignoring gender roles and the impact it has on women. However, we see a shift to integrate women into development programs in hopes to eradicate poverty and low social status.

There are five Theoretical Approaches

- 1. The Welfare Approach:** This started in the 1950 to 1970s. It was a post colonization era approach to help the newly independent countries. Aid came in to develop the new nations.
- 2. Women and Development (WAD):** This focuses on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism and the development process.
- 3. Women in Development (WID):** This emphasizes the formation of productive group and access cash income as a group member or individual
- 4. Gender and Development (GAD):** This stresses the need for women's self-organization to increase their political power within an economic system.
- 5. Mainstream Gender Equality (MGE):** This is the most recent development approach aimed on women. Gender mainstreaming ensures that all gender issues are addressed and integrated into all levels of society, politics, and programs. This approach originated in 1995 at the 4th UN Conference on women in Beijing.

WID had been dropped by many aid Agencies due to its negative interpretation from supporters as being too feminist and brought hostility from men.

Programs now plan and execute these programs with both men and women in mind.

Male dominance in every sphere of life has robbed families, communities and nations of the female contributions to nation building.

Patriarchy, Culture, Religion and Traditions have been blamed for perpetuating certain unhealthy and human rights violations and some religious practices have put lives of young pregnant girls at risk where some have lost their lives during child birth.

Gender mainstreaming ensures inclusiveness although the current 50%/50% drive has not been achieved by this approach so far.

THE CONVENTIONS

In the past twenty-five to thirty years, we have seen and been guided by various Conventions in an effort to bring Women 's issues, their rights and Gender into the 'spot light'.

The hope has been that some significant change in 'mind-set' among both men and women would take place. Indeed, some strides in some areas and generally, but not enough or are anywhere near the fifty /fifty (50% men /50% women) in all spheres of life, as some national Constitutions have put down.

BEIJING'S 12 AREAS OF FOCUS

- Women and poverty.
- Education and training of women.
- Women and health.
- Violence against women.
- Women and armed conflict
- Women and the economy.
- Women in power and decision making.
- Institutional mechanisms
- Human rights of women.
- Women and the media.
- Women and the environment.
- The Girl Child.

CEDAW'S 16 ARTICLES INCLUDE

- Definition of Discrimination against Women
- Legal and administrative measures.
- Equality.
- Temporary Special measures.
- Sex roles and stereo-typing.
- Trafficking and Prostitution
- Political and Public life.
- Participation at an International Level.
- Nationality.
- Equal rights in Education.
- Employment.
- Health Care.
- Economic and social benefits.
- Rural Women.
- Equality before the Law.
- Marriage and Family.

NGP Thematic Areas:

- Constitutional and Legal rights.
- Economic Empowerment.
- Politics and Decision Making.
- Gender and Health.
- Education Training.
- Gender and Violence.
- Gender, Environment and Climate Change.
- Media, Information Communication technology.
- Gender and Disability.
- Gender and Culture.

REGIONAL PROTOCOLS

In addition, there are Regional Protocols for an example in The Southern African Region there is The MAPUTO Protocol.

IN COUNTRY LAWS AND POLICIES

Countries have the Constitution which is the supreme Law of the Land, then Statutes/ Laws and Acts of Parliament. They also have National Gender Policies. It has also gone even to Churches where some have now got their own Gender Policy.

THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR THE SITUATION OF WOMEN (CSW)

Yearly high-level meetings are held in New York for three weeks every March to mark the Women's Month. Resolutions are made and Country delegations sign agreeing to these.

How has all of these measures been translated into the Gender Studies School and Curriculum one might ask?

THE PAST CHALLENGES FACED:

There seems to be a huge dis-connect between Theory and Practice as far as The Women's Movement is concerned which one feels needs to be addressed in the next 30 years. Academia and Schools of Gender need to form an Alliance going forward for informed Action on the ground.

In the main Women's issues have largely remained 'bread and butter' issues of income-generation and keeping body and soul' together'.

Women in Development has been the main stay. As a result, other areas like women in power and decision making and women in big business as well as women in STEM have lagged behind.

Technical Areas are 'no go areas' for women. To go in one has to wage a war and a big fight. One has to 'roll with the big boys, which is not easy without grooming and coping skills. Areas like Mining, Energy, Climate Change, some medical disciplines like Ophthalmology, but to mention a few, pose the greatest challenge to go into as a woman.

and Curriculum one might ask?

Women have been fighting in their 'small corner' for improvement in health facilities, housing and income generating spaces in towns and cities.

Women and those who speak on their behalf like The Women's Movement, must just refuse to be 'boxed' or to fight in a small corner.

Over the years one has learned that there is no school for Women's The Movement as a result non- governmental organizations spring up everywhere un coordinated in their efforts, fragmented and having not much impact locally.

There is, therefore, dire need for collective power which is key, need for renewal and thus bringing in the youth from Gender Studies School, for generational learning. Organizational renewal would occur. The new thinking, trends and dynamism would make such a difference in country initially and inter-country overtime.

DONOR FUNDING FOR GENDER EQUALITY WORK

The main challenge currently is that donor funds are dwindling with Covid-19 as countries are having their share of surge of this illness. This coupled with the Climate Change disasters around the world, funds available are being channeled mainly to Humanitarian Work. As a consequence, the gender aspect is ending up being sidelined and yet Women are both the victims and first responders when disasters strike.

We have also seen Advocacy Work that of supporting Women going into Politics and Reproductive health becoming less and less available.

Funding for Conflict and War and Peace does not specify money for women and children who suffer the most. Donors need to shorten the process and make it quicker and easier for funds to reach the victims timeously.

THE PAST ACHIEVEMENTS AND THE NEXT 30 YEARS

Fortunately, the world leaders are fully seized with the many issues be-devilling our planet and have agreed to look at them and came up with following global goals that help us to inform our actions in our various gender work.

Many nations have been implementing these with varying degrees of success and are continuing.

GLOBAL GOALS (SDG s) agreed by world leaders in 2015

- NO POVERTY
- ZERO HUNGER
- GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING
- QUALITY EDUCATION
- GENDER EQUALITY
- CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
- AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY.

- 8.DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.
- INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE.
- REDUCED INEQUALITIES.
- SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES.
- RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION.
- CLIMATE ACTION.
- LIFE BELOW WATER.
- LIFE ON LAND.
- PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS.
- PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS.

In the face of all these above initiatives, there are yet new and devastating world challenges like Covid-19, Climate Change and sustained political upheavals and strife in many a country to-date. The implications for women in general and in particular to Gender Studies Institutions such as this one, are many indeed. The world, digitally is moving at a very fast pace, while alcohol and drug abuse as well as human trafficking are at a very alarming scale and levels. On top of it all, Workplace sexual - harassment is on the increase. So is Gender Based Violence and Femicide.

How do we, as Gender Practitioners and School for Women and Gender Studies, prepare both women in general and Gender Practitioners in particular for more unforeseen challenges in the future. More importantly how do we prepare cadres from this School to brace for them? How can The School and many like it be real Change Agents in such times as these we are now living in?

How can the Institution be more proactive and provide training that empowers women themselves and those who serve them with futurist solutions to the gender aspects of disasters, pandemics and changes in the climate, among many other challenges to both men and women?

As a Rotarian myself, I would like to quote 'a fellow Rotarian' Elizabeth Usovicz who wrote in a Rotary International Director wrote in Rotary Magazine of December 2021 Issue:

“Women continue to face economic hurdle, declining levels of political participation, and challenges in the workplace, according to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2021 and Covid- 19 pandemic is among the factors that have extended the amount of time experts estimate it will take to close the gender gap from an already daunting 95.5years to 136.6years.

Especially for girls, creating opportunities that enhance their education, safety, health and wellbeing has the power to transform their futures- and also to transform their families and communities”

REIMAGINING THE FUTURE

At this point I would like to reiterate here the message from the Keynote Speaker Prof Amina Mama on Wednesday as this Conference started. She urged all of us to go back to roots and rethink Africa in order to drive her own Agenda!!!!

What connections, links and synergies can be accessed to drive our own Agenda.?

As I attempt to answer these questions I also put forward these following recommendations for the next three decades are as follows:

1. POLICY INFLUENCE BY THE GENDER STUDIES SCHOOL

The School for Women and Gender Studies, should be engaging and influencing the Ministries of Education and all Institutions of higher learning to have a Gender component in their curriculum.

I gather that Government Ministers have done their Gender Studies here and also that many of the students graduating from here have gone to work for Government as well as civil society organizations. This is very commendable indeed'

2. GENDER STUDIES AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT.

One of the roles of an academic institution is to be alive to new realities, research and come up with new courses/programs to embrace and address them. Grassroots needs have to be determined in order to inform The School of the needs on the ground.

There is therefore, a need to research on this and come up with Programs that can enhance collaboration, solidarity and sharing of experiences for overall effectiveness.

Collaborating with The Women's Movement Organizations would be very progressive in strengthening them as well as being a very useful source for data and other information for The School.

For an example The Women in Management Business and Development (WIMBD) Trust has a flagship Scholarship Program for bright and poor girls to go to university. Collaboration on this would go a long way in empowering these young women, thus creating future leaders.

Another example is of Women of Africa Arise (WAA) is spearheading Leadership Master Class as well as a Mentorship Program. Strides have been made in Trade and Expos have been held like one next month in Zanzibar. Joining hands with WAA would also enhance the work of The School.

3. E-LEARNING

This form of studying (which I gather that it is already at The School) is very impactful especially for those in full time employment and wish to upgrade their qualifications in Leadership and Management. The School of Women and Gender Studies can ride on the Digital Surge and reach many people

4. COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

Community Learning about Gender and related issues like Child Marriages and Gender Based Violence can be achieved by use of Community Dialogues. An offshoot of this would be the data collection that can be realized as well.

5. INTER-GENERATIONAL LEARNING

Gender Programs which include both the young students and older students in employment would be very useful.

6. BECOMING AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Spreading your wings as The School of Gender Studies can explore having Centers in other African Countries thus spreading its wings and influence as well as generating income from these.

In a similar way, collaborating with other Universities across African can yield yet other interesting results. For an example The Midlands State University (MSU) in Zimbabwe has a Gender Institute which could be approached to offer short courses affiliated to this School. Also exchange programs could be embarked upon. I note that Members of MSU staff are already participating in this Conference and it is very commendable.

7. Collaborating with Gender Commissions

Countries across Africa have set up National Gender Commissions. Therefore, linking up with these would bring practice and theory together thus developing new theories for Gender Praxis. There is so much data to be got from these institutions to inform Programs development.

8. Male Champions

The debate on Masculinity is gathering momentum so there is need to tap into this and come up with programs that embrace this subject matter.

There is dire need to bring men (especially progressive males) to the table for their 'buy in' and collaboration with their organization. In Zimbabwe we have PADARE (where men sit around the fire and discuss) men's court/forum is big on teaching young boys and young men how to behave as loving, responsible and progressive men.

Femicide cases are increasing at alarming scale in some countries, it would be very important to also focus on issues of toxic masculinity.

9. Opportunities

Challenges and various disaster alluded to earlier should be taken as opportunities to create and run with new thinking leading to developing new programs. I urge you, therefore, to 'think outside the box' and 'dream big'.

10. FOLLOWING UP PAST STUDENTS

What impact are you making through your past students?

It would be very interesting to see what data could come out of this to inform your future Programs going forward.

11. FUNDING IDEAS

- Apart from keeping your old friends (your current Development Partners close to you), engaging Africa-wide Institutions like AU (which I know have an Ambassador for Child Marriages) for funding Research and other activities.
- Offering the various Programs suggested above for a fee, generate financial resources.
- Collaborating in Research Projects for a fee.
- Consultancy Work as a School for Countries.
- I would like to wish you a very bright, fruitful and progressive future in the next three decades.

WEBALE NYO

TINOTENDA

SIYABONGA

I THANK YOU