

**EAMARC3 Conference-Theme: Sustainable Development Goals:
The Role of Research, innovation and capacity Building.**

TOPIC:

**Achieving Gender Equality Through
Empowerment of African Women and Girls-
SDG 5**

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Introduction and problem statement

□ From history, African women and girls have been sidelined and discriminated in participation of many issues relating to societal development; especially in areas of leadership, education, political power and religion. They are often seen as a weaker sex, whose main role has been reduced to mere objects and means to meet the ends of men.

□ This paper seeks to identify major challenges facing women and girls as an important tool of transformation in the society, and highlights on the prospects that can be embraced in empowering them to achieve equal standards of life with their male counterparts.

Definitions- Equality

- ❑ **Quality or state of being equal; having the same rights and social status(Webster Dictionary). A relationship between entities that are identical in some specific respect(descriptive concept-*Capaldi*).**
- ❑ **The notion that there is some special respect in which all human beings are in fact equal but the factual equality requires we treat them in a special way (identical or differential treatment) to restore /aid them in reaching/realizing specific state (Normative concept-*Capaldi*).**

Gender Equality & Empowerment

□ **Gender Equality-** Women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere (Hazel Reeves, Sally Baden, 2000). It goes beyond to include men and boys, as their involvement and attitude change is essential in the process of creating social relations in which neither of the sexes will be discriminated (UNESCO, 2000).

□ **Empowerment-** is about challenging oppression and inequality. challenging the forms of oppression which compel people to play a part in their society on terms which are inequitable, or ways which deny their human rights((Oxfam, 1995)

The Afro-centric View of women & girls

- ❑ There still exists historical sidelining & manipulation of women and girls(female gender) in many African countries.
- ❑ The female gender is undermined in many life aspects, including the right to opinions, choices & decision making.
- ❑ Cultural propositions & foundations in terms of proscriptions and prescriptions favor the male gender against the female; in areas of leadership, politics, education, religion, marriage and family e.t.c.
- ❑ Women & girls presented on the plate of weakness, seen as unable and weighed down as feeble, dependant & slaves to always control.
- ❑ Regarded as sex toys, with their destined place being kitchen & household jobs.

Areas of challenge to the female Gender

❑ Religious Extremism – the status of women within society is an outcome of the interpretation of religious texts (Kamila K & Tomas H, 2015). Most religions still limit women & girls in participating in religious activities, functions and meetings.

❑ Politics, power and Leadership- by virtue of their masculinity, men are assumed to be more intelligent and powerful, & are favored against women for participation in politics, power & Leadership. Women seen as sojourners.

❑ Education and employment- girls still suffer the spell of illiteracy orchestrated by denial to access education, skills & training. Without skills and knowledge, employment remains a luxury. Educated women are however sidelined in employment and oppressed; sometimes treated unequal with the males with same papers.

❑ Culture- Unhealthy stagnant cultures still remain unfavorable to women & girls. The outcomes involve early marriages, FGM, forced wife inheritance, denial of property inheritance e.t.c

Identified Gaps to Gender Equality and Female Empowerment

- ❖ **Male Chauvinistic tendencies-** many males still prejudice women in many life aspects, amounting to oppression.
- ❖ **Defunct institutional policies-** in religious, public and private institutions leading to stigmatization.
- ❖ **Corrupt cultural orientations-** many African cultures remain egocentric and inclined to favor the male gender compared to the female.
- ❖ **Misinterpreted religious beliefs-** reflected in twisting and misinterpreting the religious texts in the 'holy books' to favor exclusive interests. They favor the males compared to females.
- ❖ **Breach of & deviation from Law-constitutionalism disobeyed.**

Proposed remedies/solutions/

- ✓ **Total reformation of the cultural systems- to accept and respect women & girls as persons of worth and substance.**
- ✓ **Institutional transformation(Public &Private institutions)**
 - instituting policies and laws that respect & advance the rights and positive interests of women & girls.
- ✓ **Change of mindset- about women and girls-regarding them as able & worth as opposed to feeble and weak.**
- ✓ **Public awareness through information & education- pertaining to human rights in respect to law.**
- ✓ **Obedience and adherence to the rule of law-any deviation to be confronted with severe punishment.**

Conclusion

- **The journey to equality as well as women & girls empowerment begins by transforming the mindset of humanity to accept the fact that no human being can exist as an exclusive personal entity, both men and women must correlate to make any meaningful impact on earth. Any form of empowerment to both genders must not exalt and favor a given gender against the other; all must coexist on equal measure.**

Thank You