INTRODUCTION TO GENDER

Duration: 3 Weeks
Course Objectives

• To help students identify why and in what ways African societies are gendered
• To examine the impacts of gender relations and inequalities on development
• To critically examine state and civil society responses to gender inequalities.
• Group and Individual action
Learning Objectives

• By the end of the session you should:
  – Distinguish the difference between gender and sex
  – Be familiar with key gender concepts
  – Be able to identify gender issues in everyday life
  – Provide a gender analysis of major social issues in Africa
Week 1: Understanding Gendered Society

• At the end of today’s class, you should be able to:
  – Gain a better understanding of what is meant by gender and the factors that contribute to making a society gendered
  – Be familiar with the concept of patriarchy, masculinity
  – Be familiar with some of the discriminatory cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequality
  – Be familiar with some of the key arguments and justifications for dealing with gender inequality
BOYS WILL BE BOYS AND GIRLS
WILL BE GIRLS
Definition: Gender Vs. Sex

- Unlike sex, which is a biological concept, gender is a social construct specifying the socially and culturally prescribed ideas about the behaviour, actions, and roles a particular sex performs and follows.

- Gender is the costume, a mask, a straitjacket in which men and women dance their unequal dance – Gerda Lerner.

- Sex is definite, gender is fluid and constructed/negotiated.
Gender Equality

The concept that all human beings both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices (UNESCO, 2000)
Gender Equality contd.

Different behaviours, aspirations and needs of men & women are considered.

Rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

It does not mean that men and women have to become the same.

Valued and equally favoured.
Gender Equity

Fairness of treatment for women and men according to their respective needs

This may include treatment that is different but considered equal in rights, benefits, obligations & opportunities

Equity leads to equality
Brain Teaser

- This boy is the **biological son** of the doctor, but the doctor is **not the father** of the boy. What is the Doctor to the boy?
Why is gender an important issue in African societies

- Social construction of society (we will build our society like that)
- Discriminatory cultural practices
- Inheritance discriminatory inheritance practice
- Marriage (polygamy, rights and duties in marriage, widowhood rites, wife inheritance)
- Family and community life (chores, decision-making, seclusion, stereotypes, role expectations)
- Reproductive health (decisions on family planning, sexuality, pro-natalism)
Why is gender an important issue in African societies—contd.

• Important for social relations (gender, class, kinship, etc.)

• Social relations determine roles, positions, privileges and power.

• Gender relations are reinforced by socialisation.

• Socialisation institutions (family, church, school, media, work, etc.).

• The law as a reinforcer
Messages from Social Media (Let’s discuss)

- Which one (s) do you use?
- What messages are sent?
- How are they gendered?
- How do you respond to such messages?
Patriarchy is a social system in which the role of the male as the primary authority figure is central to social organisation and where fathers hold authority over women, children, other men and property.
Patriarchy, contd.

- It implies the institutions of male rule and privilege and is dependent on female subordination.
- Historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political and economic organisation of a range of different cultures and also influences modern civilisation.
- In modern times societies and institutions are described as patriarchal when they have features of patriarchies.
- Matrilineal inheritance systems do not disrupt patriarchy.
The term masculinity signifies a collective gender identity and not a natural attribute. It is socially constructed, fluid, resulting in diverse forms across different times and context, and mediated by socio-economic position, race, ethnicity, religion, age, geographic location and other local factors (Adomako Ampofo and Boateng 2007; Ratele 2002; Connell 1998; Morrell, 1998a;).

It is subject to change
Masculinity defines how boys should behave, be treated, dress, appear, what they should succeed at, and what attitudes and qualities they should have (Bhasin, 2004)

Hegemonic masculinity
A dominant form of masculinity in a society and pertains to the relations of cultural domination by men. In addition to being oppressive to women, it silences other masculinities. They present a version of how ‘real men’ should behave and men who are unable to live up to such prescriptions are ridiculed Eg: “Kwadwo Basia” (lit: male with perceived feminine features and attitudes)
In order to sustain itself, hegemonic masculinity is constantly on the ‘look out’ for threats against the status quo—to adjusts the balance of power to keep situation under control (Dipio, 2010)

In some cases, masculinity can become precarious and susceptible to subversion because of its extraction from flawed depictions of femininity
Elements of Gender Relations

• Division of labour
  – Productive and reproductive roles
  – Male roles and responsibilities valued more than women’s
  – Women roles and responsibilities undervalued

• Control of resources (land, power, labour, education, training, etc.)
Elements of Gender Relations,

- Gender ideologies (natural, unchanging, etc.)

- Gender myths and stereotypes (“women are their own enemies,” victim blaming, e.g. in rape, women are gossips, women are weaker sex, men are cheats, men are liars, ).
Gender Myths and Stereotypes

THE MALE BRAIN

SEX

FOOTNOTE: the "Listening to children cry in the middle of the night" gland is not shown due to it's small and underdeveloped nature. Best viewed under a microscope.
FOOTNOTE: The "Put Oil into the Car" and "Be Quite During the Game" glands are active only when the "SHINY THINGS AND DIAMONDS" OLFactory has been satisfied or when there is a shoe sale.
Brain Storming Exercise

• What are some of the important events or influences in your childhood that you feel influenced your sense of being male or female?

• Consider messages you received from parents, teachers, peers, role models, pastors

• Consider messages about, religion, identity, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age etc.
Summary

• Societies are gendered
• Gender is socially constructed
• Gender relations are power relations and privilege as well as disadvantage differently
• The concept of patriarchy and masculinity
• The concept of gender equality, equity and inequality

END OF CLASS
• Recap of Week 1

At the end of today’s class, you should be able to:

• Discuss the justification for dealing with Gender Inequality

• Identify the efforts that have been made globally, regionally and locally to deal with gender inequalities

• Be familiar with arguments for affirmative action and forms of affirmative action.
Justifications for dealing with gender inequalities

– Development imperatives
  (sustainable, people-centred development)
– Citizenship rights and the constitution (all are equal)
– Gender equitable cultures
Development Imperatives

Refer to Intro to African Studies

• Development outcomes are gendered (and we need to work on this)
Past four decades, 4 world conferences and a convention has been held and adopted to address gender equality

- Mexico City (1975),
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979
- These conferences helped to define the obstacles to gender equality and action needed to overcome them.
International Agreements Contd.

• Beijing Platform for Action

• To advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity

• Beijing +5 and Beijing +10 Outcome Documents and Declaration of 2000 and 2005.
International Agreements, Contd.

- Un Declaration on the elimination of violence against women
- Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); all 193 UN member countries have agreed to achieve by 2015
  - Halving Poverty (MDG 1)
  - Promote gender equality and empower women (MDG 3)
  - Improve Maternal Health (MDG 5)

- The African Charter on Human and People’s Rights
  - Effective measures should be undertaken to ensure that women have an active role in the development process
Historical Context to National Interventions

• **In colonial period:** No attempt to address position and status of women in society. Colonialism gendered society further e.g. through discriminatory education, jobs and preferential treatment introduced to traditional occupations, e.g. cocoa farming.

• **Early Independence:** Nkrumah’s regime had social justice policies which * advantaged * women, e.g. in job diversification for women, women in public sector and politics, etc.
• **Military Rulers:** Policies under military rulers discriminated against women, e.g. early years of Armed Forces Revolution Council (AFRC) and Provisional National Defence Council era (PNDC) when young women and traders seen as cause of economic problems. (death of Makola)

PNDC period however also championed rights of women, especially through 31st December Women’s Movement PNDC Law 111
Historical Context to National Interventions - The 4th Republic

• **Constitutional Guarantees**

All persons shall be equal before the law (17.1). A person shall not be discriminated against on grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status (17.2) and (17.3).

The State shall afford equality of economic opportunity to all citizens; and, in particular, the State shall take all necessary steps so as to ensure the **full integration of women** into the mainstream of the economic development of Ghana (35.6)
Historical Context to National Interventions-The 4th Republic

- Domestic violence Act - 2007
- Trokosi - 1998
- FGM - Criminal code amendment act of 1994
State Actions: Legal Reform

- Intestate Succession Law, 1985 (PNDC 111): Protects the inheritance rights of spouses and children
- Criminal code amendment act of 1994 section 69 criminalizes FGM
- Criminal code amendment act of 1998 section 314.a also criminalises trokosi
State Actions: Legal Reform

• The **Human Trafficking** Act, 2005 (Act 694) Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732): Seeks to protect the populace against violence and abuse in homes and institutions

• Property Rights of Spouses Bill (Before Parliament)
State Action: Policy Reform

- Reproductive Health Policy and Strategy
- Gender Policy in Agriculture
- **Girl-Child Education** Policy
- Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Maternity Leave policies
- Establishing ministry for Women and Children’s Affairs**
- Establishing of Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of Police service, now called Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU)
The presence of a cluster of intermediary organizations/associations that operate between the primary units of society (like individuals, nuclear and extended families, clans, ethnic groups, and village units) and the state. These intermediary groupings include labour unions and associations of professionals, farmers, fishermen, women, youth and students; religious and business organizations, cultural and recreational clubs, as well as political parties” (Drah 1993: 73).
Bratton’s (1994) distinguishes civil society from the state or political society. Civil society is “public”; it is not confined to the domestic or household arena, and entails collective action where individuals join to pursue shared goals (Bratton 1994: 56).
• Since colonial period women’s organisations have been important part of civil society organisations:

  e.g. Market women active in anti-colonial struggles, several women’s associations, Women’s NGOs, Women’s coalitions, e.g. Network For Women's Rights In Ghana (NETRIGHT), Women’s coalitions to demand specific actions, e.g. Domestic Violence Coalition, Women’s Manifesto Coalition
Examples: Civil Society Actions

- Getting the vote
- Getting access to reproductive freedom (birth control, abortion)
- Women’s action in anti-apartheid struggle
- Women’s action to end war in Liberia
- **Getting Domestic Violence Law passed**
- Improving women’s participation in politics
- Queen mothers associations supporting different causes (HIV, girl’s skills training, etc.)
Examples, Contd.

• Defending the rights of individual women (Federation of International Women Lawyers, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), etc.)

• Greenbelt movement in Kenya, by Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. Mobilised women to bringing about change)

• Women and gender studies in and outside universities

• Research on gender (e.g. Violence against women, women and migration, women and land, media and women, etc.)
Group Agency

- Agency refers to:
  - The means or mode of acting; instrumentality.
  - the capacity of a person or other entity to act
  - Conveys the idea that people are not passive and can change their situations through self conscious action

- The role of women’s self-help groups
  - Micro-finance groups, e.g. susu
  - Women’s cooperative, e.g. shea butter, beading, pottery, bread making, etc.
  - Widows support group
  - HIV social network groups
Individual Agency

- Instances where people have triggered change by their actions:
  - Taking legal action (e.g. Women who petitioned CHRAJ on workplace sexual harassment: FanAir, NADMO)
  - Taking a stand against gender discriminatory practices (e.g. Swaziland where mother of Reed Dance Bride protested)
  - Leaving abusive relationships
  - Learning new skills
  - to improve lives
What is Affirmative Action?

- A set of temporary measures adopted by governments, public and private institutions such as political parties, educational establishments, corporations and companies to address a history of systemic discrimination and exclusion of particular social groups.
- AA encourages the efforts of particular social groups in the interests of certain development goals (Wikipedia).
- AA is one of the effective tools for redressing the inequalities/injustices/discrimination against people (women).
Background to Affirmative Action

Origins: In USA to address racial discrimination. In South Africa to address racial and gender disparities after Apartheid

• Different kinds AA.
  – Direct (qualitative or quantitative, i.e. quotas). Eg. 45% of admissions to girls, or say 6% of admission to people from certain parts of the country or 10% of admission to persons with disability.
  – Indirect (e.g. science clinics for girls and school lunches for poor children, fee waiver or automatic accommodation for persons with disability)
Other Examples of Affirmative Action

- Scholarship schemes (Northern Ghana scholarships; cocoa marketing board scholarships)
- Fee free education; Free textbooks and uniforms
- Targeted investments in infrastructure, education and health in some Regions
- Reservations of seats for women (10 women in parliament)
- Measures to promote participation of women in certain professions
- School meals in certain districts
- Reserved places in state universities for students from deprived districts
- Girl Child Education Policies
- Lower cut-off point for girls in tertiary education
- Science clinics for girls
- 50% of appointed district assembly members are women
Affirmative Action Quotas

• Quotas for women based on two potentially conflicting justifications
  – equality
  – difference
• Symbolic value
Affirmative Action Quotas

• Quotas are only effective when backed by law and when policies such as electoral reform, political education, the mobilisation of citizens and the removal of obstacles to women’s ability to utilise the quotas are removed.
Value of affirmative Action

– Discrimination of any form does not self correct. Instead, it perpetuates itself
– Improves representation of women
– Ensures a critical mass which can make a difference (e.g. 30% of women in decision making bodies)
– Provides more female role models and improves awareness of the issues.
– Guarantees gender balanced policy making at all levels of government.
– Allows considerable skills to be brought into decision making structures.
Assessing Responses to Gender Inequality

• Progress has been made in promoting gender equality
  – More consciousness of the importance of gender equality
  – Some issues being addressed, e.g. Narrowing gap between boys and girls in education
  – In some countries there have been strong representation of women in politics, e.g. Rwanda, South Africa
  – Important legislations, e.g. Domestic violence law has been passed.
  – Increased number of women in professional careers and in decision-making
  – Improved maternal health coverage
  – More access to credit for women
Remaining Challenges

• Women still disproportionately poor
• Maternal mortality still high, not likely to meet MDG 5 by 2015
• Political representation of women low. In Ghana only about 8 percent women in Parliament
• Incidents of violence against women high despite the law
• Harmful cultural practices continue (e.g. FGM, women condemned as witches, trokosi, widowhood rites and inheritance, underage marriage and bride abduction)
• Trafficking of women, etc
Remaining Challenges contd.

- Harmful cultural practices continue (e.g. FGM, women condemned as witches, trokosi, widowhood rites and inheritance, underage marriage and bride abduction)
- Trafficking of women, etc
Why Progress is slow

- Enormity and multifaceted nature of the challenge – progress in one area can be undermined by problems in another area
- Attitudinal and behavioural change difficult to achieve and slow to effect
- Cultures evolve slowly and change slowly
- Resistance to change
- Weak political will
- Solutions often piecemeal
- Poor implementation of policies
- Not enough resources devoted to resolving issues
Summary

- We have examined the various responses to gender inequality:
- The justification for dealing with Gender inequality
- Identified the efforts that have been made globally, regionally and locally to deal with gender inequalities
- State responses – legal and policy reform; affirmative action
Summary, Contd.

• Civil society actions
• Group actions to empower and to support rights
• Individual actions e.g. Court actions, etc.
• We have assessed the responses to gender inequality and assigned reasons why
• There are still challenges
Consciousness-Raising Activity

– Identify a positive action toward women and/or men that you may not have done before this course

– Describe any act that liberates people or a person that could help change the quality of people’s lives (positive and raising consciousness)

– Your action must be non-violent and legal
END OF CLASS
Week 3: Film

Title of Movie:

PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL