



Gender Transformation for Africa: A Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal Health Research Collaborative

Transformation du genre pour l'Afrique: Une recherche concertée sur la santé sexuelle, reproductive et maternelle

Webinar Report

Journal Supplement Launch: What does it take to operationalise gender transformative approaches across different African contexts?

Thursday, July 31 2025, 14h00-16h00

GT4AFRICA Journal Launch Webinar

What does it take to operationalise gender transformative approaches across different African contexts?

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PANELIST Chinazom Ekwueme HPRG	PANELIST Lauren Wallace York University	PANELIST Witness Alfonso University of Malawi	PANELIST Colleen Wagner NACOSA	PANELIST Mat Lowe SSWH
PANELIST Abdoul M. Nouhou GRADE Africa	PANELIST Chaitali Sinha IDRC	PANELIST Stella Bosire ACHGJ	PANELIST Faith Nekabari Nfii African Union	PANELIST Friday Okonofua AJRH Journal

DATE
JULY 31, 2025

TIME
14:00 (UTC+2)
20:00 (UTC+8)



Welcome and Introduction

The webinar, Wolde highlighted, was part of the African Regional Community of Practice for Gender and Health (ACoP) webinar series, and marked the official launch of a new IDRC-funded supplement in the African Journal of Reproductive Health, featuring eight peer-reviewed articles from the Gender Transformation for Africa (GT4Africa) cohort.

The journal supplement launch aimed to share the cohort's work with a broader audience of stakeholders, discuss with key experts and practitioners what it takes to operationalise gender-transformative approaches across different African contexts, and flag the dynamics that must be addressed to strengthen the foundations of such work. Specifically, the webinar aimed

- i. To launch the journal supplement to a broader audience beyond the cohort
- ii. To provide an overview of key emerging insights and implications of the research
- iii. To initiate discussions on promising gender transformative approaches, practices and processes; navigating challenges and ensuring knowledge translation to advance gender transformative research, policy, and programs in Africa

Webinar programme

Item	Chairs	Facilitator / Presenter
Welcome and introduction, African music	Wolde	IDRC David
Plenary: The landscape Review: Editorial, Scoping Review, Authorship Paper	Sundari	Kefi Asha Wolde
Plenary: Diving into the themes -Co-design for GTA -Frontline workers -Male engagement 3 Lightning presentations one for each theme: Authors sharing key insights from their research	Asha	Authors: Chinazom & Lauren Witness & Colleen Mat & Nouhou
Plenary: Moving forward 1. How to support African engaged scholarship on GTA? 2. What kind of relationships need to be built with implementors/practitioners and social movements? 3. What does this mean for donor commitments?	Johanna	Friday Okonofua, AJRH journal Stellah Bosire, Africa Centre for Health Systems and Gender Justice, Faith Nekabari Nfii, AU Chaitali Sinha, IDRC
Open Q&A for the panel	Tanya	
Closing and Upcoming Events	Kefi	

- In his opening remarks, David O'Brien emphasised the value of locally relevant research and evidence to improve sexual, reproductive, and maternal health (SRMH). He noted that outcomes for women and girls depend not only on stronger health systems but also on addressing broader social and structural determinants. He highlighted that the GT4Africa collective has elevated African analysis and perspectives, contributing essential expertise for advancing gender equality across the continent.

The landscape of the field, overview of the GT4Africa collaborative

- The SOPH team delivered a brief presentation offering a high-level overview/landscape of the field and the key milestones of the GT4Africa collaboration.
- Kefi noted that Africa faces many challenges, yet its people remain committed to creating change and improving the future. She said that while knowledge about gender transformation is increasing, gaps persist in implementation and in African representation within published scholarship. She highlighted the supplement as a step toward amplifying African voices in this field.
- Kefi further gave an overview of the Collaboration, and that the journal supplement represents the outcome of more than two years of South–South collaboration and sustained commitment by African researchers, practitioners, and activists.
- On behalf of the cohort, Kefi expressed deep appreciation to IDRC for its flexibility and trust, which enabled meaningful collaboration and learning on gender-transformative approaches in Africa.
- Asha highlighted challenges in expanding scholarship beyond Anglophone countries to include Francophone and Lusophone contexts. She noted that discussions of power, gender transformation, and social justice were often separated from broader political struggles and intersectionality, pointing to the need for more rigorous approaches to genuinely transformative interventions.
- Wolde highlighted the importance of local ownership and leadership in gender-transformative research to achieve long-term impact. He also emphasised the need for equitable partnerships between institutions in the Global North and the Global South and the importance of focusing on locally relevant priorities.

Plenary: Diving into the themes with authors

The authors of the six featured papers shared key insights from their research, including why the work was done, what they learned about GTA for their respective themes, including co-designing and co-producing gender-transformative approaches; frontline and community-based implementation; and engaging men while safeguarding women's autonomy.

- Chinazom Ekwueme and Lauren Wallace highlighted the importance of participatory, context-sensitive co-design in gender-transformative interventions. Their work

emphasized engaging diverse stakeholders, particularly adolescents, as active contributors rather than passive recipients. Examples from Nigeria, Ghana, Niger, and Burkina Faso showed how co-design, including arts-based methods, supported cultural relevance, government buy-in, and integration into national adolescent programmes.

- Witness Alfonso and Colleen Wagner examined the role of community health workers and peer facilitators in implementing gender-transformative approaches in Malawi and South Africa. Their findings showed that these approaches improve service delivery while encouraging critical reflection on entrenched gender norms. The authors stressed the need for sustained capacity building, mentorship, and supportive policy environments to enable effective engagement and protect facilitator well-being.
- Mat Lowe and Abdoul M. Nouhou explored strategies for engaging men in maternal health in patriarchal contexts such as The Gambia and Niger. Their work emphasized moving beyond superficial inclusion toward transformative change, while carefully safeguarding women's autonomy and mobilizing community leaders to support normative shifts.

Plenary: Moving forward

The panel discussion addressed the following questions.

- How to support African engaged scholarship in the GTA?
- What kind of relationships need to be built with implementors/practitioners and social movements?
- What does this mean for donor commitments?

The discussions highlighted the need for a sustained, systemic, collaborative, and African-led agenda for gender-transformative health research and programming.

Key Insights from panel speakers

- Friday Okonofua observed that scholarship on gender-transformative approaches in sub-Saharan Africa remains in its early stages, especially in North and West Africa. He emphasised the importance of mentorship, research training, collaborative networks, and effective knowledge dissemination. He highlighted the value of involving communities and stakeholders in co-designing research and interventions.
- Faith Nekabari Nfii underscored the importance of translating research evidence into accessible formats for policymakers, enabling timely and effective decision-making and bridging knowledge translation gaps.

- Stellan Bosire highlighted the value of indigenous knowledge, noting that integrating formal scholarship with community-based understanding strengthens research outputs and their relevance.
- Chaitali Sinha stressed that scholarship must support not only researchers but also communities, institutions, and policymakers. She emphasised the need to build on previous successes and lessons, weaving together achievements and challenges to advance collective learning.
- Johanna Riha emphasised the need to translate lessons from research into actionable steps to address gaps in scholarship and donor commitments. She also highlighted the importance of acknowledging experiential learning that may not be captured in published research.

Closing remarks

- Tanya Jacobs concluded by noting that the work on gender-transformative approaches is just beginning. She highlighted the need for ongoing research, collaboration, and dialogue, and emphasised the value of continued engagement among cohort members.