



GT4AFRICA

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

Summary

3 August, Thursday

African perspectives on gender transformative approaches: Sharing preliminary findings from 19 interviews across the continent

Objectives:

- To share the preliminary findings of the interviews conducted
- To receive feedback from the cohort about patterns, highlights, outliers, and gaps
- To reflect on the value add of the research and how it relates to your work

Session 1

Welcome and informal conversation until everyone joins

Tanya and Asha warmly welcomed participants and thanked them for their presence, and expressed their excitement to engage with the cohort and get your feedback.

Tanya kicked off the session with an ice-breaker conversation about African teams that are taking part in the 2023 Women's World Cup. Four African teams made it to the World Cup: South Africa, Nigeria, Morocco, and Zambia. South Africa, Nigeria, and Morocco progressed to the next stage.



Session 2

Presentations by the research team

The research team shared an initial presentation from data collected from 19 interviews. The research primarily seeks to contribute towards filling the knowledge and practice gaps on how to best understand, conceptualise and measure the changes involved with GTA that can help improve SRMH rights and services across diverse African contexts. The presentation reviewed the background, methods, and respondents involved in the study, as well as findings related to terms, definitions, steps and strategies, measurement, achievement and challenges, and overarching principles mentioned by respondents.

PPT slides [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1aKo4-GPIV1kR77pVT5GmKSHDL9ndacpe/edit?usp=drive link&ouid=111524964272028540433&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1aKo4-GPIV1kR77pVT5GmKSHDL9ndacpe/edit?usp=drive_link&ouid=111524964272028540433&rtpof=true&sd=true)

Session 3

Discussant

Chrissie appreciated the research for centring African perspectives about GTA. She shared key takeaways and reflections on the value added of the research.

Key takeaways

- the growing presence of the concept in the continent gives GTA an African perspective and is very much needed considering the available gaps in the continent as highlighted in the background.
- the concept is finding home among professionals across multiple disciplines, engaged in different sectors needed to impact gender equality
- GTA as being context specific, with distinct nuances across different settings. The principles permeate but the concept/terms are adapted to fit the local context. This calls for more understanding of the concept in varied contexts across the continent
- The variation in the terms used to refer to this type of work shows that people are understanding and applying it differently. People working in the area have been applying gender transformative approaches, but yet the way they use the terms to refer to gender and power, varies. Coming up with a continent's understanding of the concept will be important.
- Chrissie anticipates challenges in bringing all this together and finding uniform indicators for measurement of gender transformation.
- The report shows the lack of full appreciation of terms pertaining to power relations among some of the respondents, the lack of resolve on the possibility of attaining change, and inclination to accept the status quo (sociocultural norms) as normal. It is complex and needs more time. There is a need to simplify it for people to understand and accept.
- Stakeholder engagement should be encouraged further for greater ownership and sustainability of projects. Poor commitment of stakeholders due to different interest and agendas is an ongoing challenge and can create tensions
- Importance of acknowledging community and other stakeholder perceptions is very helpful in working together in all steps of the process and in acquiring acceptance from stakeholders.
- It was noted that there is absence of universal indicators to assist in achieving equal gender power relations. This is one thing that researchers, policy makers, program planners and evaluators need to come up with as a continent.
- Participation of people from different disciplines and backgrounds is very commendable in the report and we should strengthen it even more..
- Influence of resource availability in shaping how our projects are implemented is one key factor that has to be considered seriously since resource availability is a challenge in the continent.

The value added of the research

Research demonstrates that

- we need to do more research to understand what's out there, and what people believe in, how they understand the concept(s), and how they would want it defined to suit their context
- We need to share results. There are several approaches, several topics that are handled and it will be interesting to share so that we all know what's happening, what's working in Africa, in which context, and maybe we could apply in other areas.
- There is a great need to simplify the terms that are used so that they are accessible and understandable for people to use.
- More stakeholders need to be involved to help us create more networks and partnerships that will make the concepts more clear for the continent.. The stakeholders also need to see what else we bring on board to make sure that the participants freely participate in whatever we are going to do.
- The research is really good especially being in the African context. And also I feel it's of great importance to the project that we are doing in Africa and we can adapt to different contexts in the continent.

Music/stretch/comfort break

Asha thanked Chrissy for giving a lot of food for thought based on the results presented. She invited participants to enjoy during the short break a homage song to Tina Turner, Tina was not only a remarkable artist and an incredible singer but also an emblem of women's empowerment having survived an incredibly violent relationship and broke out of that to rebuild her career and inspire many.



Session 4

Group discussion

Discussions were held in three different groups (one French, and two English groups), which were facilitated by 1/ Wolde and Asha, 2/ Nkoli and Nikki, and 3/ Suleiman and Tanya.

The guiding questions for the discussion were

- Do you see other patterns or messages emerging from the data?
- What are the highlights, outliers, and gaps?
- What is the added value of this work?
- How does this relate to your work?

Session 5

Plenary feedback and discussion

After group discussions for about half an hour, each group shared highlights in the plenary:

Group 1 – Asha

- Bringing it down to local level so that even my grandmother can understand (the definition)
- Opportunity to learn about the different approaches, eager to read the report, need to work further on gender in the African contexts to take ownership of the concepts. Gender work rests on the shoulders of women researchers and therein lies some of the challenges faced, as they may not be listened to.
- Resonated with their work, evaluation of GTA we focus on RCTs as a gold standard, but if progress is not linear what are the other approaches we need to understand particularly with regards to long term vs. funding cycles to really impact change

Group 2 – Emelia

Do you see other patterns or messages emerging from the data?

- People talked about empowerment wrt GTA at individual level but did not link to structural processes
- Different definitions and terminologies being used - but meaning is not always clear. Would it not be helpful to put these terms down in a simple way. Perhaps we need to provide some clarity/ address ambiguities. For example, when you are empowering an institution to be GTA - what about explaining in a simple way what you mean - so that you don't get locked into semantics.

What are the highlights, outliers, and gaps?

- How are we going to decide what is GT (with every project in GT4 Africa has a different focus - eg. in Ghana's project they are looking at how to make PHC services GT - so how do we decide whether this facility has moved on...) perhaps we can look at WHO gender assessment tools to assist us to measure change?
- Another member of the group also noted the lack of a tool to assess gender power linkages and how GTA has been converted or implemented into our different interventions.
- Noted that only 10/19 respondents gave a definition of gender responsiveness and the presenters are all well informed and working in the field to improve services - however there seemed a lack of clarity to define what a GT approach was. Is there a place or space to describe what their understanding is or is there another way of drawing out these definitions?

What is the added value of this work?

- Issues raised about networking, and having a participatory way of working with local stakeholders - for example, co-designing interventions with local stakeholders.
- The networking and working with others - allows you to think about opportunities in other areas (beyond your small cocoon of work)

How does this relate to your work (in your project)?

- We will be starting co-creation (this presentation supports the importance of working with different stakeholders and community members) - after we have done an analysis of their interests (Emilia)
- We need to be pushing for development of policies that are gender responsive rather than gender blind (Michelle)
- Lack of resources keeps coming up as an issue and how interventions need to end as there are not funds to support the on-going implementation of these interventions. We need to think of creative interventions that go beyond the life-cycle of the project (eg. capacity building for those that will be working on the projects in the future - perhaps that is one way of thinking beyond financial resources)
- Related to the above, (Paapa) noted that there is always funding for SRH but almost nothing for mental health - this has implications for the girls in our context.
- Marginalization of mental health should be flagged (Irene) - in our project in Ghana the AYP are always linking SRH issues to mental health issues - we need to look at the connections much more - given mental health is so intertwined with SRH.

Group 3 – Suleiman and Tanya

Do you see other patterns or messages emerging from the data?

- I liked the sentiment that the work should be contextual. The historical context was very interesting
- The researchers were not prescriptive and did not come with predefined definitions so it was more centered around their practice their contextual understanding, issues and actions.

What are the highlights, outliers, and gaps?

- The understanding or definition of concepts are very diverse. It makes it a bit difficult to pinpoint some issues and activities.
- A number of participants alluded to the diversity of understanding of terms and how important it is to extract the understanding from the context. Yes there are overlapping points so we can use that as a starting point in spreading awareness and understanding.
- There's a lot of work at the individual level. In this case there was considerable empowerment at individual level but very limited at a political or systemic level. What are the reasons for this?
- Working at a political level is expensive and slow so what does it mean for practitioners and researchers adopting a socio-ecological model

What is the added value of this work?

- Context is very important when one of the participants referred to themselves as a gender transformation group and in Ghana where we work our partners were resistant because their understanding of gender transformation related to transgender persons or persons changing their gender

How does this relate to your work?

- We never thought that we were doing gender transformation work but the briefing that we attended really helped our understanding of the term. The training helped us discover that we have something to offer and can contribute to this field of work because it is so broad.
- As a funder it has become somewhat of a tick box exercise that has to be included everywhere but it is really useful in the way the research team approached it

Session 6

Closing comments

Asha appreciated the discussion and report back from the different groups. She added that it is very intriguing to hear and exciting considering that it is a large network, and the potential amongst all the different types of research that is being done across the continent.

Paapa also thanked participants for making time to attend this webinar. He appreciated hearing about all the work that is happening on the ground by colleagues across the continent. He said the research and discussion further fuels the cohort's engagement in the area of gender transformation.

Asha reminded participants about the next webinar, which is scheduled for 9th November, and the plan to do a deep dive on male engagement as per feedback with the steering committee and based on the cohort survey responses.

Asha alerted participants that a draft report on the webinar that pulls together the different resources will be shared within the coming weeks. We also plan to do a validation session with all the respondents. She invited participants to access and share the cohort resources on Google Drive. She ended the session by thanking the research team and participants for all their contributions.