



**Gender Barriers Faced by African Women in  
Graduate Programmes and Research in the  
Social Sciences**

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# **Gender Barriers Faced by African Women in Graduate Programmes and Research in the Social Sciences**

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A PASGR Scoping Study  
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## Executive Summary

This scoping study begins with a brief description of the state of universities in Africa, highlighting some current problems and challenges. Section II undertakes a review of literature about the role and status of female students and faculty members in African universities, especially in the social sciences and discusses issues of access. Section III provides an in-depth analysis of social sciences journals published in Africa and outside. Section IV explores the organisational culture of the social sciences in Africa, focussing specifically on governance structures and exploring the gender activities that have been carried out by social sciences organisations. Section V discusses measures that are underway to redress gender imbalance while Section VI makes some recommendations for potential activities to support the participation of women in social sciences research. The paper concludes with a brief review of some of the main findings.

### Brief Overview of Universities in Africa

While the 1960s and 70s were an era of growth and expansion for universities, the 1980s and 90s were a period of decline. This was partly due to the heavy burdens of debt repayment imposed by the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) coupled with the Bank's reluctance to support higher education. The demand for higher education continued to grow even as existing facilities became less able to support growing student numbers. To cope with this pressure, new universities were established in most countries, some funded by public resources, other partially or wholly funded from private resources. Most analysts of the current status of tertiary education in Africa agree that universities across the continent today face a multitude of challenges ranging from continuing pressure for places, unstable and/or reduced government financing, difficulty in attracting and retaining good faculty, and the impact of globalisation and internationalisation that have led to the need for curriculum reform. For most institutions struggling with the challenges discussed above, gender equity has been a low priority.

Organisational and institutional cultures of African universities like those of western-style universities in general, were established to meet the needs of male faculty and students. Patterns of leadership, beliefs, symbols, structures, ceremonies, power and information flow are modelled on masculine expectations and experiences. Sexual harassment and sometimes sexual violence are recurrent problems. Women are often denied academic opportunities because it is assumed that they will be unable to combine them with their reproductive responsibilities. Finally, university curricula and knowledge production are heavily biased towards male preferences. Few African journals publish feminist research and/or feminist critiques of mainstream thinking. Consequently, feminist scholars who develop epistemologies that aim to analyse the gendered social structures within which they live and work, are not necessarily able to find academic outlets for their work.

### Social Sciences Research Outside the Universities

Most government departments undertake research for policy and planning purposes. In many countries, the private sector carries out product-related research. Donor agencies and NGOs support research on topics of interest to them. Most of this applied research is narrowly focussed and addresses concrete problems. A few African think tanks and policy research institutes have been active for many years, but numerous others have been established more recently with the spread of democracy. During the past decade there has been discussion about the establishment of gender-focussed think tanks in various African countries, but to date none has materialised. National or regional gender-focussed think

tanks would help to further validate and legitimise research on gender as well as helping to ensure that African critical thinking in the social sciences includes a feminist perspective.

### **Impact of Sources of Funding on Social Sciences Research Topics**

Only South Africa provides state funding for research. Researchers in other countries are mostly dependent on international donors and access to funding for social sciences research is a problem everywhere. The necessity to seek donor funding for research circumscribes the topics and methodologies that can be pursued. For many female researchers, it creates additional, sometimes insurmountable, problems in that they are less likely to have studied overseas and to have contacts outside their own country or even institution. They also are less likely to collaborate with senior researchers.

Numerous analysts have commented on the widespread tendency for African social scientists to undertake consultancy assignments. Although consultancy assignments can provide essential additional income, the topic of the research is often highly instrumental and the boundaries are determined by the funders. Consequently, much of the critical mass of social science research that has been built up over time by some of the continent's most accomplished researchers is skewed towards the interests of funding agencies.

## **Participation of African Women in Social Sciences Training, Teaching and Research: a Review of Some Relevant Literature**

### **Women in Universities: Numbers**

The relatively low numbers of women enrolled in universities and employed as faculty members is a starting point for understanding the patriarchal university cultures in Africa. In recent years, some university administrators, under pressure to increase the female presence on campus, have established quota systems and sometimes remedial programmes to ensure greater female enrolment. While this has helped some women to enter tertiary institutions, a quantitative approach unaccompanied by changes in attitudes and behaviour has done little to change the overall culture of the universities.

### **Female Students**

According to the World Bank, sub-Saharan Africa still has the lowest level of tertiary enrolment, with 1.8% of youth enrolled in 1998 and 5.6 in 2007. At the same time, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest average expenditure per student as a percentage of GDP per capita (\$268.2 per student compared with a world average of \$90.5 per student). Enrolment of women is comparatively higher in many of the new, private, fee-paying universities. Most females enrolled in private universities have family circumstances that allow them to pay fees and higher socioeconomic origins may be true for female students in general at both public and private institutions.

Numerous factors have contributed to the lower enrolment of women in African universities, including smaller numbers of qualified female candidates; insufficient places; unfriendly environments for women; insufficient female role models; societal values, beliefs and practices that mitigate against female higher education; and high rates of unemployment for both male and female higher education graduates. Although overall enrolment of women in African universities is low, social sciences attract relatively higher numbers of women. However, some social sciences disciplines lead to greater opportunities than others. Economics and business tend to attract the largest numbers of students and funding. Women are mostly invisible in economics training programmes in Africa.

The experiences of both male and female students, especially at the post-graduate level, are often negative. Most universities have no tradition of mentoring, and faculty members tend to be overworked and have little time to give personal attention to students. Many seek additional employment outside the university in order to make ends meet. The small number of female academics means that there are few female role models for students.

The institutional culture in African universities tends to be heavily biased against women as students and as professors. A multi-country Gender and Institutional Culture project concluded that gender inequalities were present in all universities and that this may also have had an impact on the production of knowledge in these institutions.

### **Female Faculty Members**

Where women faculty members are present, they are usually concentrated at the lower levels. The multi-country research project on Gender and Institutional Culture in African Universities, undertaken between 2004 and 2006, studied conditions at numerous African universities. The research found that the proportion of female academic staff ranged from as low as 6.1% at the University of Addis Ababa to 12% at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop and 21% at the University of Zimbabwe. The University of Ibadan and the University of Ghana both had 24% female faculty. However, women were mostly present at the lowest academic levels.

### **Problems Faced by Women in Academia**

#### **Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence**

Sexual harassment can vary from use of suggestive or derogatory language by male professors and/or students to actual physical demands for sex. Since the definition is so broad, it is sometimes difficult to establish exactly what constitutes sexual harassment.

A study at the University of Malawi identified some key definitional characteristics of sexual harassment: lack of a proper legal definition of what constitutes sexual harassment; lack of a clear university policy on sexual harassment; lack of clearly defined structures to report cases of sexual harassment; lack of basic training regarding sexual harassment; the “culture of silence”; fear of reprisals; fear of being labelled by the college community; and an absence of political will amongst most stakeholders to debate over the issue. The researchers found that the most common form of sexual harassment was verbal and concluded that most cases went unreported and there was a general culture of silence and fear of reprisals. The victims of sexual harassment were mainly female students, with some male students and male lecturers being considered as the perpetrators. The multi-country Gender and Institutional Culture project also found that sexual harassment most often goes unreported.

Many universities have tried to combat sexual harassment. However, it has proved difficult to enforce such policies. A study of 10 South African universities found that while most academic staff were aware of the existence of sexual harassment policies in their institutions, less than a third had copies and less than a quarter had ever received training or guidance in the use of the policies.



### **Mentors and Networking**

Male faculty have long-established networks and have often been able to identify mentors but women lag behind, not least because of their smaller numbers and because they are usually concentrated at the lower levels, with little influence.

Research in Kenya found that male academics often hesitate to mentor or work collaboratively with female colleagues for fear of being seen as having a sexual relationship with them. Research in Mauritius also found that senior male faculty members were reluctant to act as mentors for junior women faculty. They were too busy advancing their own careers to take on this additional task, there was no culture of mentoring in the university, and some considered it inappropriate for an older man to mentor a young woman. Most studies report that women have fewer contacts than men outside their own institutions. They were less likely to travel outside their home countries for further training or conferences and they had fewer ties to other professionals working in their own area of interest.

Although mentoring can be an important mechanism for introducing students and junior faculty members into academic life, it can have a deleterious effect for women if the culture into which they are being mentored is unremittingly patriarchal. This suggests the need for feminist mentoring.

### **Career/Life Balance**

Finding an appropriate balance between career and family is problematic for many female academics. A study of economists in Ghana and Liberia found that women cited family responsibilities as the single greatest obstacle to their professional growth. The African Association of Universities (AAU) Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit (2006) observes that in most African societies, women are considered “home builders” and have a higher level of responsibility for their children and homes than their husbands. This makes it difficult for them to leave their children for extended periods of time for further education or training courses.

### **Ameliorative Strategies: Efforts to Improve the Representation of Women**

Numerous universities have made efforts to increase the participation of women both as students and faculty members. Often, these efforts have come as a result of lobbying and activism by feminists.

### **Affirmative Action**

Affirmative action strategies undertaken by public universities have included reducing the entrance requirements for women; providing remedial courses for women; and/or providing financial assistance specifically for female students. During the 1990s, public universities in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe all lowered the cut-off points for admission of female candidates. Gender mainstreaming (GM) – defined as a strategy to ensure that the concerns and experiences of both women and men are integral to the functioning of a university and that both women and men benefit equally from their university experience – has been underway since the 1990s in some institutions but the progress has been low. Assessments of the value of affirmative action strategies have been mixed. On one hand, they have led to slightly higher levels of female participation but on the other hand, they have sometimes backfired against women with male accusations of favouritism and assumptions of female intellectual inferiority. There is little information about affirmative action in hiring practices at African universities.

### **Gender Studies/ Women's Studies Programmes**

Many universities have established programmes in gender studies and/or women's studies and/or centres. The programmes were set up to meet different types of needs. South Africa is home to the largest number of programmes and centres. Some analysts have observed that although the number of women's and gender studies centres at African universities has grown, they have had limited impact on changing gender relations at their institutions. They often operate in isolation from other departments and the mainstream activities of the universities; they lack adequate staff and resources to run gender sensitisation programmes; and their directors sometimes have little knowledge of or interest in gender issues. Notwithstanding such problems, over the past two decades, these centres have produced a cadre of trained feminist scholars and activists who now bring their skills and knowledge to different facets of their societies.

### **Career Advancement**

#### **Opportunities for Scholarships, Fellowships and Grants**

Available evidence suggests that women are considerably less likely to benefit from scholarships, fellowships and grants for further study. The male bias begins at the secondary school level. It continues at the post-graduate level and even afterwards. Women with small children are less likely to take up fellowships and study leave opportunities because of family responsibilities. Even scholarship/ fellowship programmes intended to increase the stock of African specialists/scholars in specific areas have not benefitted women equally.

There are various reasons why women receive fewer scholarships, fellowships and grants. Firstly, the pool of eligible women is smaller. Secondly, some women are unable to accept opportunities even when they are offered, because of family commitments and/or lack of support from their spouses. Thirdly, the award of grants is often dependent on the recommendation of senior scholars in the field, most of whom are male. Finally, the institutions that provide grants or manage grants on behalf of funders may be "gender blind," failing to recognise that women are under-represented and not identifying this as a problem.

#### **Research and Publications**

Publication is a key criterion for promotion in most African universities, especially the public ones. Overall publication rates of African academics, male and female, are still quite low by global standards but women publish even less than men. A study in South Africa found that men at higher education institutions published almost twice as much as women and that the most productive men published many more peer reviewed articles than the most productive women. Explanatory models for these variances have included differences based in gender socialisation; workplace deficits, i.e. organisations are less hospitable to women; and external influences, especially women's heavier family responsibilities. For many academics, research and publication have not been a priority because of their difficult working conditions and the need to take on extra remunerated work.

#### **Promotion of Women into Senior Academic Positions**

Many women face obstacles in the pursuit of academic careers and in achieving promotion once they have been hired. According to the Association of African Universities, female candidates for academic positions sometimes endure harassment from senior male faculty members who are hostile to women. Research in Kenya found that men were promoted

more quickly than women, especially in public universities even when they had joined the university at the same time and at the same rank. To some extent, the concentration of women in the lower academic ranks can be explained by the fact that they tend to take longer to complete their PhDs, spend less time on research and often have fewer publications. Some have argued that where there is competition for resources, women are less likely to have access to research tools such as computers. Work-related travel, including fieldwork or participation in conferences, may also be problematic, especially for women with young families.

## Discussion

Based on a review of available literature, it is apparent why women are under-represented as students and researchers in the social sciences in Africa. They face obstacles at every stage of their academic careers from secondary school onwards and it is not surprising that they often become victims of the “leaky pipeline,” the term used internationally to describe the phenomenon of women dropping out of academic programmes at different stages along the way from undergraduate to senior researchers/ professors. Although many universities have tried to create a more hospitable environment for female students and faculty members, there are still widespread reports of sexual harassment, of unequal treatment by university administrators and of societal pressures that make it difficult for women to advance as far as their capabilities might allow. Despite these problems, there are reasons for optimism. First, while the numbers of African women faculty members are still small, they are growing steadily, especially in the humanities and social sciences. As more women become prominent in universities, their presence there will be accepted and institutional cultures will have to change. Second, the presence of women’s and gender studies centres at universities across Africa has already led to the production of knowledge about the contribution of women to economic, social and political development.

## Contribution of Women to Social Sciences Research in Africa: The Data

The original data collected for this study confirms most of the observations discussed in the literature review. An examination of the contribution of Africa-based female authors to international journals reveals that the *African Studies Review* and *Social Science and Medicine* have relatively high levels of contribution from Africa-based women while the others have less than 20% female contribution. Female publication rates in CODESRIA journals are also low. Women are especially under-represented in political science. The female publication rate in OSSREA journals is equally poor. Comparative male and female publication rates at PASGR’s African university partners follow the general pattern described above but there are some interesting anomalies. For example, Kenyatta University, alone among the universities, has a higher publication rate for females than for males – 52.0% vs. 48.0%. There does not seem to be a tendency for women in some regions to be consistently better published than women in other regions. To the extent that such assertions can be made, it could be speculated that some universities have higher proportions of published female social scientists than others.

## Where are Africa-based Social Scientists Publishing?

In order to determine where Africa-based social scientists are publishing, lists were made of all the journals in which researchers at PASGR’s collaborating universities published. Journals based in the United Kingdom drew the largest number of authors from Anglophone Africa, followed closely by journals based in the United States or Canada. The majority of the African journals were based in South Africa.

## Research Topics Chosen by Male and Female Social Scientists

Men were much more likely to publish alone or with other male authors while women published almost as many papers collaboratively with male authors as they did on their own or with other women. Few women are lead authors in jointly published papers. It is noteworthy that almost one quarter of the papers published by women focussed on aspects of gender. Among the male

researchers, 26% published on aspects of education, compared with only 14% of women. Both men and women were active in the field of librarianship but men were much more prominent in public administration and politics.

### **Organisational Culture of the Social Sciences in Africa**

Selection of research topics has not been studied in the African context but it seems likely that there are also differences between male and female researchers. In South Africa, female faculty members thought that their work would not be favourably reviewed because the topics were not of interest to mainstream journals most of which had male editors. Another female faculty member in the same study asserted that she would never submit her work to a journal that specialised in gender because such a publication would not be respected by her male colleagues.

Although most journal reviewers are anonymous, they all bring their own preferences and biases to their task. It is possible that journals with predominantly male editorial boards may be less open to topics that are of interest to female researchers. The data reveals the extent to which the editorships and editorial boards of all the CODESRIA journals are dominated by men. Female researchers may hesitate to submit their work to certain journals, thinking that their work will not be accepted. They may think that their research topics are different from those published by the journals. Moreover, journal editors often invite contributions from scholars they consider to be doing interesting work. If women are not part of the workshops, seminars and professional networks where such “interesting work” is discussed and where invitations are issued or if they are marginalised because they are seen as “junior” or “unknown”, then they are unlikely to be encouraged to submit to the journals.

The 2011 Executive Committee of CODESRIA comprised seven men (including the chair) and three women. The Scientific Committee also comprised seven men and three women (including the President). The CODESRIA Executive Secretary was male and his five predecessors since CODESRIA’s establishment in 1973 have all been male. The OSSREA Executive Council included four men and three women. The Executive Secretary was male, like all his predecessors. Nineteen of OSSREA’s Liaison Officers, based on university campuses throughout the region, were male; five were female. OSSREA has undertaken targeted affirmative action to increase the participation of women in its governance structures.

Donors have been emphasising the need to integrate women into all aspects of African development since the 1980s and, over the years, substantial funds have been made available for this purpose. Over the past 30 years, a critical mass of African gender advocates has emerged. Both CODESRIA and OSSREA have sponsored gender research competitions for many years. Given this concentration on gender issues over a period of at least two decades, it is surprising that the CODESRIA and OSSREA governance structures have relatively little female input and that their journals publish relatively few women authors. The gender activities undertaken by the two organisations seem to exist in a parallel world and have little overlap with the other activities of the organisations or with their governance structures.

There are ongoing efforts in many countries to improve the representation of women in positions of power and decision-making but it is a slow process, which ultimately must include gender sensitive government policies, advocacy and support from male colleagues and partners. There are on-going efforts in OSSREA to improve the participation of women in its work and AERC also has embarked on a comprehensive effort to involve women in economic research and

training. Numerous other organisations like FAWE and AAWORD are working towards the same end.

### **Potential Activities to Support the Participation of Women in African Social Sciences Research**

Social sciences organisations in Africa should consider undertaking a series of activities, including:

1. Confidence building among female social scientists
2. Training in writing social sciences materials for publication
3. Strategic targeting of specific African social sciences organisations and journals
4. Increasing opportunities for women in research programmes and courses
6. Supporting sabbatical placements for women.

## Gender Barriers Faced by African Women in Graduate Programmes and Research in the Social Sciences: A Scoping Study

Every society requires home-grown capacity to collect and analyse social, political, economic and cultural data for effective policy formulation and implementation.<sup>1</sup> Institutions like Makerere University in Uganda and the University of Ibadan in Nigeria have been graduating social scientists since the 1940s.<sup>2</sup> From the 1950s onwards, the social sciences community grew in most countries of Africa, although it still remains relatively small (Sall 2010). During the past two decades, African social scientists have established a substantial body of work that brings important insights into the examination of African development. At the same time, many scholars have identified continuing problems that beset social sciences research in Africa. Few have remarked on the notable gender imbalance of the social sciences research community. While there are some prominent females among African social sciences researchers, women as a whole are under-represented and feminist knowledge production has not been integrated into the overall curricula of African universities.

With a few notable exceptions, including Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa, all of which have more than 50% female enrolment, participation of women in higher education is still low in most African countries (World Bank, 2009a). However, the World Bank reports that in 2006, only nine countries had equity policies aimed at providing greater opportunities for women to participate in higher education.<sup>3</sup>

The limited presence of women in African social sciences has received little attention. For example, the all-male Steering Committee of the British Academy's Africa Panel, which produced the Nairobi Report (2009) for the Commonwealth Association of Universities, made many good suggestions for building capacity in social sciences research in Africa, but it did not identify the lack of equitable participation of women as problematic. The report emphasised the need for institutional strengthening, improving structures, systems and governance; for creation of communities and networks to encourage collaboration across African institutions; and for investing in individuals, especially at the early stages of research careers. As will be demonstrated, this lack of attention to the participation of women is typical of the overall marginalisation of women in African social sciences.

In 2000, one out of every eight Africans with a university education lived in an OECD country (Ratha et al 2011). The International Organization for Migration estimates that 23,000 academics and 50,000 middle and senior management personnel leave the continent each year. More than 40,000 Africans with PhDs now live outside Africa (quoted in Yizengaw, 2008) and recent studies suggest that women with tertiary education are constituting an increasing proportion of the brain drain (Dumont, Martin and Spielvogel, 2007). The continent's research community is greatly disadvantaged by the continuing loss of trained human resources, both male and female, and African contribution to world research remains low. A recent list of the top

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<sup>1</sup> The author is grateful for comments from two anonymous reviewers.

<sup>2</sup> South African universities have a much longer history: The University of Cape Town was established in 1829 and the country's oldest historically black institution, the University of Fort Hare, was established in 1916.

<sup>3</sup> Benin, Central African Republic, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Niger, Senegal and Uganda

31 research-producing countries in the world included only one country from Africa – South Africa in 29th place (King, 2004).

The overall objective of this scoping study is to present a snapshot of the participation of women in social sciences research in Africa and to provide a set of recommendations for increasing the presence of women. It is not intended as an in-depth critical review of the state of higher education in Africa although it does provide an overview of some recent literature on African higher education and more specifically, on the participation of women in higher education as students and faculty members.

Although the volume of research produced at non-university institutions is growing, universities are still the most important sources of social sciences research in Africa. They are significant producers of knowledge and the chief producers of skilled African human resources. To better understand the participation of women in social sciences in Africa, it is crucial to examine the overall institutional culture of African universities and the extent to which they provide a friendly environment for female students and faculty.

This study begins with a brief description of the state of universities in Africa, highlighting some current problems and challenges. Section II undertakes a review of literature about the role and status of female students and faculty members in African universities, especially in the social sciences and discusses issues of access. Section III provides an in-depth analysis of social sciences journals published in Africa and outside. Section IV explores the organisational culture of the social sciences in Africa, focussing specifically on governance structures and exploring the gender activities that have been carried out by social sciences organisations. Section V discusses measures that are underway to redress the gender imbalance while Section VI makes some recommendations for potential activities to support the participation of women in social sciences research. The paper concludes with a brief review of some of the main findings.

## I. Brief Overview of Universities in Africa

There is a rich literature on the history of the African university (e.g. Yesufu, 1973; Ashby and Anderson, 1966).<sup>4</sup> Numerous universities were established during the colonial era and the early post-colonial period, usually with a limited mandate to train civil servants and a small professional cadre. Assié-Lumumba (2011) observes that the early post-colonial universities were replaced by “development universities” with strong roles in nation building and national development. Because most governments did not allow their national universities to express and debate ideas freely, the universities became technocratic in nature, focussing on the production of ‘highly qualified human capital.’

While the 1960s and 70s were an era of growth and expansion for universities, the 1980s and 90s were a period of decline. This was partly due to the heavy burdens of debt repayment imposed by the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) coupled with the Bank’s reluctance to support higher education. Most governments invested little in their universities, existing facilities became rundown, and library collections suffered as journal subscriptions were dropped and few new books were added. Universities were slow to acquire personal computers

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<sup>4</sup> The oldest universities in Africa (and the world) are the University of al-Karaouine in Fes, Morocco, founded in 859 by Fatima al-Fihri, a woman, and Al-Azhar University in Egypt, founded in 970-72. The University of Timbuktu in Mali was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. These historic institutions are not discussed here.



for staff and students, and the price of connectivity was too high for most scholars to access internet resources, even where they were available. Staff were underpaid and overworked and brain drain became a major problem.

The demand for higher education continued to grow even as existing facilities became less able to support growing student numbers. To cope with this pressure, new universities were established in most countries, some funded by public resources, others partially or wholly funded from private resources. According to Sawyerr (2002), in 1960, sub-Saharan Africa had 52 universities and by 2000 there were 316.<sup>5</sup> Most analysts of the current status of tertiary education in Africa agree that universities across the continent today face a multitude of challenges ranging from continuing pressure for places, unstable and/or reduced government financing, difficulty in attracting and retaining good faculty and the impact of globalisation and internationalisation that have led to the need for curriculum reform (e.g. Sawyerr, 2002; Teferra and Altbach, 2004). The extent of government intervention in university governance varies from one country to another. For example, Angola, Guinea, Liberia and Congo all allow considerable freedom to their universities while others, such as Benin, Cameroon, Tanzania and Madagascar all exercise substantial control over the operations of their universities (Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2006). Universities in fragile states have had to cope with problems of security for faculty and students, and in political contexts where funding for education as a whole is minimal, tertiary education tends to receive little or none (Chauvet and Collier, 2007).

Universities have adopted different strategies to meet these demands. For example, some public universities have set up parallel programmes with different criteria for student selection and where students, who sometimes are studying part-time, pay full fees. This has enabled students who formerly would have been denied access, including married women, opportunity to pursue higher education. It also has allowed the universities to pay their lecturers better salaries. However, in some cases, it has led to even more overcrowded classes and a perceived decline in the quality of education (Oketch, 2009).

A second strategy has been to allow the creation of private universities. For example, in Kenya, public universities can absorb only about 10,000 of the annual 50,000 school leavers who meet the eligibility criteria (Onyongo, 2007). Numerous, private for-profit universities have been set up in Kenya and elsewhere, often specialising in courses like business administration. Some governments have actively encouraged the establishment of universities with religious affiliations. The Government of Ghana appealed to its Moslem community to establish an Islamic university and the government of Uganda donated land for the establishment of the private Islamic University of Uganda (Karram, 2011). Karram observes that this had the dual purpose of increasing the number of tertiary education places while also providing opportunities for communities that had been marginalised in the past.

As will be discussed, some private universities have welcomed female faculty members and appointed them into senior positions. However, most private institutions are focussed on teaching (and often in very narrow fields) and research has a low priority in many universities. According to Atuahene (2011), the research environment in most African universities, including public institutions, is weak. He identifies lack of leadership support and weak research management capabilities, together with heavy undergraduate teaching loads, low graduate student enrolment and poor research infrastructure and facilities as key factors.

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<sup>5</sup> It is hard to say exactly how many universities exist today as there are no recent statistics.

For most institutions struggling with the challenges discussed above, gender equity has been a low priority. However, some analysts argue that this is one of the key areas in which African universities can strive for transformation. Aina (2010) observes that while some institutions have formally complied with gender equity goals by increasing numbers of female students and faculties, their institutional cultures continue to be male dominated, with entrenched male privileged relations of power and governance and a refusal to accept feminist scholarship as part of teaching programmes. Barnes (2007) suggests that prevailing university cultures in Africa and elsewhere are aggressive and combative. This is not necessarily a style that comes easily to female academics that as girls were socialised to avoid conflict and seek consensus. Female students (and sometimes female lecturers) often have to cope with sexual harassment and sometimes sexual violence. They are less likely to form close relationships with their male teachers or colleagues and consequently are less likely to receive close mentoring and/or academic guidance. Family responsibilities often make it difficult for them to apply for fellowships and grants that will take them away from home. All these issues are discussed in detail below.

### **Institutional Culture of African Universities from a Gender Perspective**

Organisational and institutional cultures of African universities, like those of western-style universities in general, were established to meet the needs of male faculty and students. Patterns of leadership, beliefs, symbols, structures, ceremonies, power and information flow (Carrol and Mills, 2006) are modelled on masculine expectations and experiences. It is impossible to generalise across countries, languages and universities, but a few common themes emerge from a review of relevant literature. Women, both as students and lecturers, are still greatly under-represented.<sup>6 7</sup> Sexual harassment and sometimes sexual violence are recurrent problems. Women are often denied academic opportunities because it is assumed that they will be unable to combine them with their reproductive responsibilities. Finally, university curricula and knowledge production are heavily biased towards male preferences. As noted by Barnes, “institutional cultures in modern, Western, African/South African universities maintain the ability to produce and reproduce ways of knowing that privilege certain kinds of maleness, and sideline and marginalise other ways of knowing and of knowledge production” (2007:17). Few African journals publish feminist research and/or feminist critiques of mainstream thinking.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, feminist scholars who develop epistemologies that aim to analyse the gendered social structures within which they live and work, are not necessarily able to find academic outlets for their work. There is a growing African feminist critique of the shaping of knowledge and knowledge production in African universities but it is beyond the terms of reference of this study.

### **Social Sciences Research Outside the Universities**

Although universities are the main producers of social sciences research in Africa, and they are the focus of this study, they are not the only sources of knowledge production. Most government departments undertake research for policy and planning purposes. In many countries, the private sector carries out product-related research. Donor agencies and NGOs support research

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<sup>6</sup> This is also true in most Western countries where women are still under-represented in senior academic positions, especially in sciences and engineering (Rathgeber, 2009). However, in North America and in many European countries, women have reached enrolment parity with men and in some universities now form the majority.

<sup>7</sup> There are some private women’s universities. For example, Women’s University in Africa, founded in 2002 in Harare, Zimbabwe, states in its charter that 85 percent of enrolled students should be female.

<sup>8</sup> *Feminist Africa* is an obvious exception but it only publishes a few articles annually.

on topics of interest to them. Most of this applied research is narrowly focussed and addresses concrete problems.

A few African think tanks and policy research institutes have been active for many years, but numerous others have been established more recently with the spread of democracy. Some undertake specific tasks on a regular basis, such as Ghana's Institute of Economic Affairs, which organises a presidential candidate debate during each election. Many focus on domestic issues such as HIV-AIDs, environmental policy and economic development.

A recent global survey estimated that there were 5,080 think tanks in the world, of which 554 or 8.4% are based in sub-Saharan Africa (McGann 2012). African countries with 15 or more think tanks are highlighted in Table 1 below. Countries with no think tanks included: Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ten African think tanks were included among the "Top 100 non-U.S. Think Tanks World Wide" for 2012 (McGann 2012). They were: (37) African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) (South Africa); (45) South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA); (47) Institute for Security Studies (ISS) (South Africa); (66) Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPSS) (Egypt); (69) IMANI Center for Policy and Education (Ghana); (71) African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) (Kenya); (73) Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) (South Africa); (76) African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) (Kenya); (91) African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) (Kenya); and (94) Free Market Foundation (FMF) (South Africa).

**Table 1: Think Tanks Based in Africa**

Angola	4	Algeria	9	Benin	14	Botswana	13
Burkina Faso	16	Burundi	5	Cameroon	21	Cape Verde	2
Central African Republic	2	Chad	3	Congo	3	Congo D.R.	7
Côte d'Ivoire	12	Egypt	34	Eritrea	5	Ethiopia	25
Gabon	2	Gambia	6	Ghana	36	Guinea	2
Guinea-Bissau	1	Kenya	53	Lesotho	4	Liberia	3
Madagascar	5	Malawi	15	Mali	9	Mauritania	2
Mauritius	9	Morocco	11	Mozambique	4	Namibia	14
Niger	4	Nigeria	46	Rwanda	7	Senegal	16
Seychelles	3	Sierra Leone	1	Somalia	6	South Africa	86
Sudan	4	Swaziland	4	Tanzania	15	Togo	4
Tunisia	18	Uganda	28	Zambia	9	Zimbabwe	24

Source: McGann (2012)

A few Africa-based think tanks include female leadership. For example, in 2011, the governing council of the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) included seven men and five women. In addition, the two directors of research were both women. At the Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) in Tanzania, the four most senior staff members in 2011 were male and the four of the five senior staff at the next level were female. However, other institutions were male dominated. At the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), Kenya, all of the seven senior directors and division heads were male. The Social Sector Division was headed by a woman who served in an acting capacity. At the Namibia Policy Research Institute (NEPRU), five of the six members of the Board were male and the Director and Principal Researcher were both male. African universities are an important source of board members, staff, consultants, trainers and training materials for the continent's think tanks and policy research institutes (Sall, Yap and Felleson, 2004).

During the past decade, there has been discussion about the establishment of gender-focussed think tanks in various African countries but to date none has materialised. National or regional gender-focussed think tanks would help to further validate and legitimise research on gender as

well as helping to ensure that African critical thinking in the social sciences includes a feminist perspective.

### **Impact of Sources of Funding on Social Sciences Research Topics**

Only South Africa provides state funding for research (Mouton, 2010). Researchers in other countries are mostly dependent on international donors and access to funding for social sciences research is a problem everywhere. Sall, Yap, and Felleson (2004) identified SIDA/SAREC, NORAD, DANIDA and the Dutch, French and British governments in addition to various American foundations (most notably Ford, Rockefeller, Mellon, Kresge, Kellogg, Atlantic Philanthropies and Carnegie) and Canada's International Development Research Centre as major sources of funding. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has also become a key source, especially for social sciences work related to health and/or agriculture.

The necessity to seek donor funding for research circumscribes the topics and methodologies that can be pursued. For many female researchers, it creates additional, sometimes insurmountable, problems in that they are less likely to have studied overseas and to have contacts outside their own country or even institution. They also are less likely to collaborate with senior researchers. Consequently, female researchers have to acquire the skills of grant writing, often with little outside assistance. Kwesiga (2011) also notes that female academics often are not competitive and when they work as members of teams, they do not strive to take on the role of team leader.

Numerous analysts have commented on the widespread tendency for African social scientists to undertake consultancy assignments (Kwesiga, 2011; Assié-Lumumba, 2006; Mlambo, 2006; Sall, Yap, and Felleson, 2004). Although consultancy assignments can provide essential additional income, the topic of the research is often highly instrumental and the boundaries are determined by the funders. Consequently, much of the critical mass of social science research that has been built up over time by some of the continent's most accomplished researchers is skewed towards the interests of funding agencies. In the area of gender studies, there is an additional concern in that feminist researchers need to combine their research with advocacy to bring about change (Moult, 2008; Ampofo et al, 2004). The focus on advocacy may not be acceptable for funding agencies or for government funders. Ampofo et al (2004) assert that studies on gender are even less likely to receive support from government sources than other social research areas and they see this as a key reason for the continuing dearth of sex-disaggregated social data.

## **II. Participation of African Women in Social Sciences Training, Teaching and Research: A Review of Some Relevant Literature**

### **1. Women in Universities: Numbers**

The relatively low numbers of women enrolled in universities and employed as faculty members is a starting point for understanding the patriarchal university cultures in Africa. In recent years, some university administrators, under pressure to increase the female presence on campus, have established quota systems and sometimes remedial programmes to ensure greater female enrolment. While this has helped some women to enter tertiary institutions, a quantitative approach unaccompanied by changes in attitudes and behaviour has done little to change the overall culture of the universities.

## Female Students

According to World Bank figures, in 2007, 25.5% of the world's youth was enrolled in tertiary education, a substantial increase from 8.5% in 1985. However, sub-Saharan Africa still has the lowest level of tertiary enrolment, with 1.8% of youth enrolled in 1998 and 5.6% in 2007.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest average expenditure per student as a percentage of GDP per capita (\$268.2 per student compared with a world average of \$90.5 per student) (World Bank, 2009a).

Data from 2003-04 (Table 2) provides some insight into the continuing disparity between male and female enrolments at African universities. The gaps tend to be highest in former French colonies (Assié-Lumumba, 2006).

Enrolment of women is comparatively higher in many of the new, private, fee-paying universities (Mama, 2003). Data for Kenya reveals that in 2004-05, female students constituted 54.5% of those enrolled in private chartered universities, down slightly from 56.7% in 2000-01 (Onsongo, 2009). Kwesiga (2011) observes that women with families are now able to study because they do not have to travel as far as in the past when universities were few and mostly based in capital cities. The new private universities also offer diverse modes of study – in-service, weekend, evening, distance, etc.

However, private universities are not accessible to all. Most females enrolled in private universities have family circumstances that allow them to pay fees (Onsongo 2007; Mwiria et al 2007; Mama 2003). In fact, higher socioeconomic origins may be true for female students in general. In Ghana, Adusah-Karikari (2008) found that parental and/or outside influence had a major impact on the educational futures of girls and Tsikata (2007), also writing about Ghana, found that the female faculty members tended to come from more affluent homes than male faculty members.

**Table 2: Female Enrolment (%), Selected African Universities, 2003-04**

Country	Female Enrolment
Nigeria	39.9
South Africa	52
Tanzania	24
Uganda	34

Source: Gunawardena et al. n.d.

Bunyi (2003) identified numerous factors that have contributed to the lower enrolment of women in African universities including smaller numbers of qualified female candidates; insufficient places; unfriendly environments for women; insufficient female role models; societal values, beliefs and practices that mitigate against female higher education; and high rates of unemployment for both male and female higher education graduates.

<sup>10</sup> All the 10 countries worldwide with the lowest enrolment rates are in Africa: Madagascar, Angola, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Tanzania, Central African Republic, Niger and Malawi (World Bank, 2009a).

Although the overall enrolment of women in African universities is low, social sciences attract relatively higher numbers of women. For example, women comprised 30.8% of social sciences students in Kenya's public universities in 2001 (Mwiria et al, 2007). Similarly, data for Mozambican private universities in 2005 and 2006 shows that women had higher enrolment rates than men in social sciences, management and law (World Bank, 2009b). Data for South Africa shows that between 2000 and 2005, the social sciences had the highest growth rate among doctoral programmes in the country's universities. As seen in Table 3, women were well represented.

**Table 3: Female Graduates by Field and Qualification (%), South Africa, 2000 and 2005**

Broad Field	Honours		Masters		Doctoral	
	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005
Natural & Agricultural Sciences	15	11	12	13	25	21
Engineering & Applied Technological Sciences	0	2	2	3	3	3
Health Sciences	4	3	17	16	19	18
Humanities	12	11	18	20	14	17
Social Sciences	68	78	51	48	37	41

Source: Council on Higher Education, 2009.

However, some social sciences disciplines lead to greater opportunities than others (Sall, Yap and Felleson, 2004). Economics and business tend to attract the largest numbers of students and funding. Women are mostly invisible in economics training programmes in Africa, both at the universities and in activities supported by the African Economics Research Consortium (AERC), which aims to build African capacity in economic analysis (Odura, 2010).

The experiences of both male and female students, especially at the post-graduate level, are often negative. Most universities have no tradition of mentoring, and faculty members tend to be overworked and have little time to give personal attention to students. Many seek additional employment outside the university in order to make ends meet. The small number of female academics means that there are few female role models for students (Bunyi, 2003). This lack of role models and mentoring may be one reason why many students do not see academia as an attractive career option. Qualitative research with male and female post-graduate students in South Africa found that few were interested in pursuing academic careers. Those who planned to become academics were already employed full-time as lecturers (Portnoi, 2009).

The institutional culture in African universities tends to be heavily biased against women as students and as professors. A multi-country Gender and Institutional Culture project concluded that gender inequalities were present in all the universities and that this may also have had an impact on the production of knowledge in these institutions. Some discriminatory practices were blatant but most often such practices "operated below the radar" and were reflected in casual

remarks, assumptions, and behaviour of students, faculty and university administrators (Mama, 2009).

### Female Faculty Members

Where women faculty members are present, they are usually concentrated at the lower levels. Mama (2009) estimates that women in African universities make up 29% of academic staff, compared with the global figure of 41% but that they comprise only 6% of professors (as compared with about 24% in the US). Tsikasi's (2007) description of the situation at the University of Ghana at Legon may be typical:

“Current figures put the number of women professors at 19% of the total. In 2006, women associate professors were 2.3% of academic staff and women full professors were 0.7% of academic staff. For men, the figures were 10.8% for associate professors and 8.9 for full professors. More than 60% of female academics are in the lecturer grade as opposed to less than 50% of men.”

The multi-country research project on Gender and Institutional Culture in African Universities undertaken between 2004 and 2006 studied conditions at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal, the University of Ghana, the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, the University of Zimbabwe and the University of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia (Mama, 2009). The research found that the proportion of female academic staff ranged from as low as 6.1% at the University of Addis Ababa to 12% at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop and 21% at the University of Zimbabwe. The University of Ibadan and the University of Ghana both had 24% female faculty. However, women were mostly present at the lowest academic levels.

Table 4 below provides an overview of the growth from 2000 onwards in the percentage of female faculty numbers in selected African universities. They range from 16 to 22% at the University of Dar es Salaam to 34 to 41% at the University of Stellenbosch. Unfortunately, the data does not provide information on the level of academic positions occupied by female faculty. Table 5 presents growth, over time, of total female academic staff in three countries. Mozambique and South Africa showed modest increases but Tanzania had a slight decrease.



**Table 4: Total Academic Staff and Percentage Female, Selected African Universities, 2000-08**

University	Year	Total	Percentage
		Academic Staff	Female Staff
University of Ghana	2000	702	20
	2008	993	24
University of Ibadan (Nigeria)	2001	1261	23
	2006	1156	25
University of Stellenbosch (South Africa)	2002	776	34
	2007	786	41
University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)	2003	872	16
	2007	1094	22

Source: Adapted from Tetley (2009)

**Table 5: Academic Staff, Total Numbers and Percentage Female, Selected Countries**

Country	Year	Total	Percentage
		Academic Staff	Female Staff
Mozambique	2000	770	23
	2004	1113	25
South Africa	2001	14740	39
	2006	16077	42
Tanzania	2002	1617	17
	2007	2103	16

Source: Adapted from Tetley (2009)

## 2. Problems Faced by Women in Academia

### ***Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence***

A sizeable literature addresses the issue of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence at institutions of higher education in Africa. Sexual harassment can vary from use of suggestive or derogatory language by male professors and/or students to actual physical demands for sex. Since the definition is so broad, it is sometimes difficult to establish exactly what constitutes sexual harassment. A research project involving several universities in Southern Africa concluded that,

“The hierarchical nature of universities coupled with patriarchal cultures of leadership means that there are multiple zones of seniority operating within the campus, and those considered ‘junior’ are consistently vulnerable to unwanted sexualisation from men” (Bennett et al 2005).

Ampofo et al (2004) note that it is not uncommon for students to have relations with lecturers that sometimes end in marriage and Pereira argues for a distinction between the concepts of sexual harassment and sexual corruption, “the latter being applied to women students who solicit their male lecturers for grades, course entrance, and examination questions” (in Ampofo et al, 2004).

A study at the University of Malawi identified some key definitional characteristics of sexual harassment: lack of a proper legal definition of what constitutes sexual harassment; lack of a clear university policy on sexual harassment; lack of clearly defined structures to report cases of sexual harassment; lack of basic training regarding sexual harassment; the “culture of silence”; fear of reprisals; fear of being labelled by the college community; and an absence of political will amongst most stakeholders to debate over the issue (Kajuni and Simbeye, 2008). The researchers found that the most common form of sexual harassment was verbal and concluded that most cases went unreported and there was a general culture of silence and fear of reprisals. The victims of sexual harassment were mainly female students, with some male students and male lecturers being considered as the perpetrators.

The multi-country Gender and Institutional Culture project also found that sexual harassment most often goes unreported. At the University of Addis Ababa, female students sometimes seek protection from males of their own ethnic group or community rather than report sexual harassment to university authorities (Mama, 2009).

Tsikata (2007) in an analysis of the University of Ghana discussed verbal sexual harassment directed towards both female students and faculty members. She stressed the lack of respect given to female faculty, noting: “Female faculty were routinely called ‘Auntie’ and ‘Mama’, while their male counterparts were addressed by titles signifying their academic achievements”. Beoku-Betts (2005) similarly recounts the experience of a fully-qualified female academic scientist who was addressed as ‘Mrs’ to avoid confusion with her husband who was employed at the same West African university and was addressed as ‘Dr’.

Many universities have tried to combat sexual harassment. For example, the University of Botswana established a sexual harassment policy in 2000 after female students threatened public protest against the behaviour of some male lecturers (Bennett et al, 2005). However, it has proved difficult to enforce such policies. A study of 10 South African universities found that

while most academic staff were aware of the existence of sexual harassment policies in their institutions, less than a third had copies and less than a quarter had ever received training or guidance in the use of the policies (Joubert, Van Wyk and Rothmann, 2010). Similarly, Endeley and Ngaling (2007) found that about one quarter of male and female faculty members in a large sample at the University of Buea in Cameroon did not know what kinds of actions on campus would promote a gender-sensitive culture.

### ***Mentors and Networking***

According to Adusah-Karikari (2008), female faculty members are just beginning to learn the importance of mentors and networking. She asserts that male faculty have long-established networks and have often been able to identify mentors but women lag behind, not least because of their smaller numbers and because they are usually concentrated at the lower levels, with little influence. In a qualitative study of female academics in South Africa, Mabokela and Mawila (2004) found that none of their subjects had had mentoring or support on research and publication. They all said that they lacked experience in research, publication and conference presentations.

Onyongo (2009) observed that in Kenya's public universities, male faculty members often believe that women who occupy high administrative positions have been appointed into them because they had had sexual relationships with the men who appointed them. Indeed, this belief is so widespread, and not only in Kenya, that male academics often hesitate to mentor or work collaboratively with female colleagues for fear of being seen as having a sexual relationship with them.

Research in Mauritius also found that senior male faculty members were reluctant to act as mentors for junior women faculty. They were too busy advancing their own careers to take on this additional task; there was no culture of mentoring in the university, and some considered it inappropriate for an older man to mentor a young woman (Thanacoody et al, 2006). Similarly, in South Africa, there was no culture of mentorship and it was not an activity that senior faculty members considered important. Even students received little mentoring support (Mabokela and Mawila, 2004; Mabokela, 2002). Beoku-Betts (2005) reported that many female scientists teaching in several different West African universities also felt isolated when they first joined their departments. Some had to work hard to be taken seriously by more senior male colleagues. However, Tsikata (2007) reports that in Ghana, at least one woman took a strategic approach, seeking assistance from various senior male colleagues on different aspects of her work so as to avoid suspicions of a special relationship with one individual.

Most studies report that women have fewer contacts than men outside their own institutions. Champion and Shrum (2004), looking at women scientists in Ghana, Kenya and India, found that they were less likely to travel outside their home countries for further training or conferences and they had fewer ties to other professionals working in their own area of interest. Duque et al (2005) found that both male and female scientists in Africa were less likely to use the internet to maintain research ties. They attribute at least some of this reluctance to continuing problems with connectivity experienced by many African scientists.

Finally, it should be noted that although mentoring can be an important mechanism for introducing students and junior faculty members into academic life, it can have a deleterious effect for women if the culture into which they are being mentored is unremittingly patriarchal. This suggests the need for feminist mentoring.

### ***Career/Life Balance***

Finding an appropriate balance between career and family is problematic for many female academics (ASHEWA, 2010). A study of economists in Ghana and Liberia found that women cited family responsibilities as the single greatest obstacle to their professional growth (Oduro, 2010). Female economists working outside academia said that they were often denied opportunities or otherwise sidelined because male colleagues assumed they would not have time for new professional challenges (even when they would willingly have undertaken those challenges).

Adusah-Karikari's study of female university faculty and administrators in Ghana (2008) stressed the difficulty of combining career and family and many of her respondents reported that they had turned down fellowships and opportunities to study abroad. The African Association of Universities (AAU) Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit (2006) observes that in most African societies, women are considered "home builders" and have a higher level of responsibility for their children and homes than their husbands. This makes it difficult for them to leave their children for extended periods of time for further education or training courses.

Ukpokolo (n.d) examined the situation of dual career academic couples in Nigeria and concluded that women inevitably subsumed their careers to those of their husbands. While women sometimes benefit by sharing resources and ideas if their husbands are in the same field, social pressures make it difficult for them to be seen as more successful than or senior to their husbands. Prozesky (2008) found that successful female academics in South Africa often had postponed, fractured, or changed focus in their early research careers in order to accommodate the career needs of their husbands.

A study of female post-graduate students in Nigeria (Etejere n.d.), revealed that lack of support from their spouses was the most common problem cited. Almost 83% of more than 1,400 respondents identified this as their main problem. Beoku-Betts (2005) notes that African families are usually extended, which adds to the burdens for women. The majority of women in her study were responsible for raising the children of less affluent family members. Thanacoody et al (2006) reported that female academics in Mauritius often admitted to feeling guilty at not being able to successfully fulfil their family and child-rearing responsibilities. They added that some of this guilt had its source in the expectations of other people, particularly their parents.

### **3. Ameliorative Strategies: Efforts to Improve the Representation of Women**

Numerous universities have made efforts to increase the participation of women both as students and faculty members. Often, these efforts have come as a result of lobbying and activism by feminists. However, Barnes and Mama (2007) question why it has proved so difficult to make the institutional policies, procedures and practices of African universities more equitable, and observe that efforts to address gender inequalities, even when they come from local women, often are branded as being imports of "foreign" thinking.

#### ***Affirmative Action***

Affirmative action strategies undertaken by public universities have included reducing the entrance requirements for women; providing remedial courses for women; and/or providing financial assistance specifically for female students. During the 1990s, public universities in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe all lowered the cut-off points for admission of female candidates. Between 1990 and 1999, female enrolments in Ghana grew by 6% and at

Makerere University in Uganda by 7%. At the University of Dar es Salaam, in Tanzania, female enrolment increased from 19% to 27% between 1997 and 2000 (World Bank, 2009a; Bloom, Caning and Chan, 2006). Affirmative action policies have been introduced more recently at the University of Zambia. Currently, 30% of first year admissions and 25% of bursaries are reserved for female candidates. The university's strategic plan also states that one of its main objectives will be to mainstream gender in all its programmes (Seshamani and Shalumba, 2011).

Gender mainstreaming (GM) - defined as a strategy to ensure that the concerns and experiences of both women and men are integral to the functioning of a university and that both women and men benefit equally from their university experience - has been underway since the 1990s in some institutions but progress has been slow. Makerere University set up an affirmative action programme in 1990 to increase the number of women students, but in 2011 female undergraduate enrolment had only reached 40% overall and only 20% in the sciences. The University established a Gender Mainstreaming Division (later renamed the Gender Mainstreaming Directorate), headed by a Deputy Registrar in 2002 and considers GM a priority area.

At the University of Dar es Salaam, many concrete steps have been taken towards GM including the development of a university gender policy and an anti-sexual harassment policy, and the establishment of a gender centre. Overall, the university's vision is to become a gender sensitive community with sound achievements in gender balance and mainstreaming in its administrative, research, teaching and consultancy structures. The gender centre was established in 2006 to help the university achieve these goals.

In Nigeria, the University of Ibadan set up a Gender Mainstreaming Office in 2011. It aims to provide training through conferences and workshops, sensitisation, monitoring and evaluation, investigation of gender and sexual harassment issues, research, consultancies (GM for organisations and institutions), mentoring, advocacy and counselling.

Assessments of the value of affirmative action strategies have been mixed. On one hand, they have led to slightly higher levels of female participation but on the other hand they have sometimes backfired against women with male accusations of favouritism and assumptions of female intellectual inferiority (Ampofo et al, 2004). Mama (2003) asserts that as long as affirmative action policies in African universities are not designed to ameliorate the deficits accrued at the secondary school level, they will simply replicate the experiences suffered by girls at earlier stages in their academic careers. Indeed, despite the modest success of affirmative action strategies in increasing female student enrolments, many feminist writers note that the overall environment and institutional culture of tertiary education institutions remains hostile to women (e.g. Onyongo, 2009; Ampofo et al, 2004; Bunyi, 2003; Mama, 2003).

There is little information about affirmative action in hiring practices in African universities. One of the objectives of Makerere's Gender Mainstreaming Directorate is to advocate for increased recruitment, promotion and retention of female academic staff. While the Directorate has tracked and celebrated the success of some senior female academics at Makerere, the university's most recent job advertisements (December, 2012) made no reference to giving preference to qualified female candidates. The same is true of Kenyatta University, University of Ibadan, University of Ghana and the University of Cape Town.<sup>11</sup> The University of Cape Town

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<sup>11</sup> These observations are based on a sampling of job advertisements in 2011-12 for a few prominent English-speaking public universities in different parts of Africa. No effort was made to do an exhaustive search.

does have an employment equity policy, which is mentioned in job advertisements and the policy states that, “The immediate aim of the University is to ensure the development of a critical mass of Black staff, with an equitable representation of women and people with disabilities, at all levels (UCT, 2006).” However, its job advertisements do not explicitly invite applications from people in these under-represented categories.

### ***Gender Studies/Women’s Studies Programmes***

Many universities have established programmes in gender studies and/or women’s studies and/or centres. The programmes were set up to meet different types of needs. For example, Egerton University in Kenya established its Centre for Women Studies and Gender Analysis<sup>12</sup> in 1991 in response to female students’ demands to address concerns such as sexual harassment and unwanted pregnancies that had a negative impact on their academic performance (Mwiria et al, 2007). The University of Addis Ababa set up the Centre for Research, Training and Information on Women in Development (CERTWID) as part of its Institute of Development Studies in 1991. Its objectives were to help women to empower themselves economically, socially, politically and culturally and it undertook various research and training programmes. However, CERTWID was underfunded and understaffed from the beginning and it soon was asked to meet demands that exceeded its capacity in terms of human and financial resources; the university turned to it for anything having to do with gender; female students came for advice and support on academic, economic and personal problems; NGOs asked it to sit on governing boards; parliamentarians asked for input on women/gender issues. At the same time, CERTWID did not have a voice in the university governance structure and had no administrative assistance, all of which created a stressful environment (Mulugeta, 2007). CERTWID became an independent Center for Gender Studies in 2006 with a larger staff and currently is focussed on teaching and research.

In Uganda, the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies was set up at Makerere University in 1991 partly to produce a cadre of gender-sensitive graduates who would go on to work in government, NGOs and the private sector where they would serve as catalysts of change (Kasente, 2002). Although the department was established to promote transformational change and progressive values, over time, the women faculty found themselves forced to conform to the aggressive, competitive, patriarchal culture of the university. Deborah Kasente observes that, “The outreach courses that were central to the department’s efforts to support the aims of the women’s movement died because of the dominance of a culture that prioritised high-profile achievements and career advancement, and the department has lost many experienced staff who found the aggressive environment intolerable (2002)”.

Pereira (2004) notes that although several universities in Nigeria tried to establish gender studies centres, they all struggled from lack of funding, insufficient institutional support and lack of autonomy in decision-making. The University of Ibadan has had a Women’s Research and Documentation Centre (WORDOC) since 1987, which organises seminars, workshops, conferences and public lectures on women and gender issues.

South Africa is home to the largest number of programmes and centres. The African Gender Institute (AGI) at the University of Cape Town was set up in 1996 to challenge the imbalances resulting from persistent gender discrimination, inequality and racism in higher education institutions in Africa. It delivers undergraduate and post-graduate courses in gender and

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<sup>12</sup> Now renamed Institute of Women, Gender and Development Studies.

women's studies and undertakes projects aimed to strengthen research, networking, capacity-building and knowledge-creation throughout (Anglophone) Africa. These projects have been focussed through many different themes, for example, militarism and conflict; institutional culture; land and livelihood, sexual rights; policy on gender-based violence (<http://agi.ac.za/about/history>).

In 2002, the AGI launched a project entitled "Strengthening Gender and Women's Studies for Africa's Transformation" (GWS) that aimed to support teaching and research in gender and women's studies by bringing Africa-based university lecturers and researchers together in training, research and publishing activities, and a combination of online communications and workshops. An early project was the mapping of gender and women's studies teaching and research programmes in 30 African institutions (Boswell, 2003). The survey found that most of these programmes were working in isolation and under "precarious" conditions in conservative intellectual environments. The work being done was mostly from a "women in development" perspective rather than from a transformative feminist stance (Mama, 2011). The survey also found that there were only three doctoral programmes in gender/ women's studies in Africa, two of them based in South Africa, and concluded:

"Without more gender and women's studies PhDs there is little hope for bridging the divide between Western and African feminist knowledge production, and addressing the current domination of Western feminist scholars as the producers of knowledge about African women. The paucity of doctoral programmes in Africa also has implications for the continued Western domination of research and publication in the field ...The dearth of PhD programmes in gender and women's studies points towards an ongoing battle, far from over, for inserting gender studies as a recognised and legitimate field of study within the academy (Boswell 2003)".

Although the GWS project has ended, one of its outcomes was the establishment of *Feminist Africa* in 2002. This was the continent's first gender studies journal and it has made a major contribution by giving voice to African gender debates.

Some analysts (Ampofo et al, 2004; Onyango, 2007) have observed that although the number of women's and gender studies centres in African universities has grown, they have had limited impact on changing gender relations at their institutions. They often operate in isolation from other departments and the mainstream activities of the universities; they lack adequate staff and resources to run gender sensitisation programmes; and their directors sometimes have little knowledge of or interest in gender issues. Notwithstanding such problems, over the past two decades, these centres have produced a cadre of trained feminist scholars and activists who now bring their skills and knowledge to different facets of their societies.

#### 4. Career Advancement

##### ***Opportunities for Scholarships, Fellowships and Grants***

Available evidence suggests that women are considerably less likely than men to benefit from scholarships, fellowships and grants for further studies. The male bias begins at the secondary school level. In Kenya, females comprise less than one-third of the 6% of secondary school

students who secure undergraduate admission to public universities on government sponsorship (Mwiria et al, 2007). It continues at the post-graduate level and even afterwards. Women with small children are less likely to take up fellowships and study leave opportunities because of family responsibilities (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Campion and Shrum, 2004). For example, at the University of Zambia, opportunities to become staff development fellows or special research fellows are heavily skewed towards males and men also are more likely to be sponsored by the government, employers, churches, or NGO sources or to be self-sponsored (Seshamani and Shalumba, 2011).

Even scholarship/fellowship programmes intended to increase the stock of African specialists/scholars in specific areas have not benefitted women equally. An evaluation of the AERC found that only 11.3% of the participants in the 2002 and 2003 biannual workshops were women. This was despite the fact that AERC had noted the significant under-representation of women in its programmes as early as 1995 and had resolved to improve the imbalance (Wuyts, 2004). Women are also under-represented in AERC's training programmes. Oduro (2010), reports that only 13% of the 172 research awards for doctoral research awarded between 1989 and 2002 went to women.<sup>13</sup>

There are various reasons why women receive less financial assistance in form of scholarships, fellowships and grants. Firstly, the pool of eligible women is smaller. Secondly, some women are unable to accept opportunities even when they are offered, because of family commitments and/or lack of appropriate support from their spouses. Thirdly, the award of grants is often dependent on the recommendation of senior scholars in the field, most of whom are male. Finally, the institutions that provide grants or manage grants on behalf of funders may be "gender blind," failing to recognise that women are under-represented and not identifying this as a problem. Moreover, awareness of gender imbalances does not necessarily lead to immediate corrective action, as is seen in the case of AERC.

### ***Research and Publications***

Publication is a key criterion for promotion in most African universities, especially the public ones. Overall publication rates of African academics, male and female, are still quite low by global standards. A study of citations in the Thomson-Reuters Essential Science Indicators for 2004-2008 revealed that South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania and Ghana produced the most social sciences research but their combined production was only 1.5% of world social sciences production (Table 6).

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<sup>13</sup> Since 2010, AERC has tried to improve the gender balance in its programmes.



**Table 6: Most Prolific African Countries in Social Sciences Publications, 2004-08**

Rank	Number of Publications	Proportion of World Total (%)
<b>South Africa</b>	2107	1.06
<b>Nigeria</b>	331	0.17
<b>Kenya</b>	221	0.11
<b>Tanzania</b>	179	0.09
<b>Ghana</b>	140	0.07

Mouton's (2010) UNESCO-supported overview of African research in the social sciences found that growth in African publications has come mostly from North Africa. In South Africa, social sciences and humanities scholars publish predominantly in South African journals while those in natural and health sciences publish more frequently in foreign journals.

Table 7 shows the growth in social sciences publications output in several African countries over the past two decades. The data is not disaggregated by sex but numerous studies have concluded that men publish more than women.

Source: Adapted from Adams, King and Hook, 2010

For example, a comparison of male and female publication rates in international journals in 1994 and 2000, taken from a sample of scientists in Kenya, Ghana and India found a significant male advantage (Miller, 2006, reported in Ynalvez and Shrum, 2009). The analysis found no gender differences with respect to type of publication. A study in South Africa found that men at higher education institutions published almost twice as much as women and that the most productive men published many more peer reviewed articles than the most productive women (Prozesky, 2008). Explanatory models for these variances have included differences based in gender socialisation; workplace deficits, i.e. organisations are less hospitable to women; and external influences, especially women's heavier family responsibilities.

**Table 7: African Social Sciences and Humanities Output, 1987-2007**

Countries	Number of Articles	% Distribution	Overall Growth Rate (%)
<b>South Africa</b>	10,895	50.7	185
<b>Nigeria</b>	3,552	16.5	-27
<b>Kenya</b>	1,739	8.1	127
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	985	4.6	54
<b>United Republic of Tanzania</b>	813	3.8	235
<b>Ghana</b>	683	3.2	174
<b>Botswana</b>	660	3.1	224
<b>Ethiopia</b>	517	2.4	250
<b>Uganda</b>	487	2.3	890
<b>Cameroon</b>	405	1.9	2,282
<b>Zambia</b>	306	1.4	325
<b>Malawi</b>	255	1.2	920
<b>Namibia</b>	204	0.9	2,814
<b>Grand Total</b>	21,506	100	112

Source: Adapted from Mouton, 2010

Until the 1990s, most social sciences journals in South Africa were run by white male academics who enjoyed privileged status under the apartheid regime. Many senior male social scientists from this era continue to have disproportionate influence on what is considered publishable work or important knowledge (Moult, 2008). In interviews with black female South African faculty members, Mabokela (2002) found that many of her subjects thought that local journals were controlled by “old boys’ networks” and they were not receptive to articles on gender, on rural areas, or written from non-Western perspectives.

According to Mouton (2010), some South Africa-based social sciences journals have acceptance rates of 70% and, therefore, have provided convenient and undemanding sources of publication for local authors. Many have been subsidised by the South African government for more than two decades. Mlambo (2006) found that other African academic journals have faced severe funding difficulties and that academics often save their best work for prestigious “international” journals, making it more difficult for African journals to acquire reputations as prestigious journals.

There is international evidence that publication strategies of male and female academics differ. A large scale study of women scientists in the USA found that women tend to be more cautious, thorough and attentive to detail. They are less likely to break problems up into smaller areas and to publish on each area, resulting in fewer publications, overall. Studies also show that women who have done significant work in their field are less likely than men to be considered to have made a major contribution (Sonnert and Holton, 1995).

For many academics, research and publication has not been a priority because of their difficult working conditions. Oduro (2010) found that Liberian lecturers had little time for research and publication because they were obliged to teach in more than one institution to earn enough to support their families. However, Beoku-Betts’ qualitative study (2005) of female West African scientists found that most published several articles a year, although sometimes in journals that were not highly valued by their departments.

### ***Selection of Research Topics***

Men and women tend to concentrate in different areas of research. A study of social scientists in Denmark found that female researchers were well represented in fields like health, gender studies, culture, leisure, immigration and ethnicity. Male researchers preferred methodological approaches taken from the natural sciences, objectivity, mathematical models, rationality, universality and cumulative results. They also had a much higher tendency to work on topics associated with societal power (Andersen, 2001).

Leahey (2006) looking at research topics chosen by American male and female social scientists found that men were much more likely to specialise in sub-fields. Specialisation has concrete advantages in that it is easier to master a body of literature in a sub-field, to fully understand the different theoretical debates and methodological approaches and to make concrete contributions within this framework. She found that men published repeatedly in the same field, thus enhancing their academic productivity. Moreover, within sub-fields, their professional networks were fostered and the chance of having papers accepted by journals was also increased.

It is likely that there are also differences between African male and female researchers, although this has not been formally studied. In South Africa, female faculty members thought that their work would not be favourably reviewed because the topics were not of interest to

mainstream journals most of which had male editors (Mabokela and Mawila, 2004). Another female faculty member in the same study asserted that she would never submit her work to a journal that specialised in gender because such a publication would not be respected by her male colleagues.

In Kenya, both male and female academics said that they had been discouraged by negative comments received from journal reviewers and some thought that there was a bias against Africa-based scholars and the issues they brought forward (Mweru, 2010).

### **Promotion of Women into Senior Academic Positions**

Many women face obstacles in the pursuit of academic careers and in achieving promotion, once they have been hired. According to the Association of African Universities, female candidates for academic positions sometimes endure harassment from senior male faculty members who are hostile to feminism (AAU, 2006). Once hired, women frequently are assigned departmental tasks associated with student care and nurturing, including counselling, organising student activities, community service and outreach. These are time-consuming activities and usually do not count towards promotion (AAU, 2006). Occasionally, women have been able to turn such nurturing activities to their advantage. At the University of Zimbabwe, young women faculty members took on the responsibility of organising the social sciences tea room, ensuring that supplies were bought and members paid their subscriptions. In taking on this task, which in pre-structural adjustment days had been performed by a male university employee, they were ensuring that there continued to be a safe place for academics to discuss research interests. The tea room was a space where all academics mixed regardless of status. It gave young female lecturers access to senior faculty members, often males, who could help them navigate the system to obtain funding for research that could lead to eventual promotion. Although the women took on the serving role, the decision to do so also allowed them to participate in informal academic discussions and networking (Gaidzanwa 2007).

**Table 8: Relative Positions of Male and Female Academic Staff, Kenyatta University, Kenya 2009**

Position	Male	Female	Percentage Female
Professor	29	2	6
Associate Professor	39	15	28
Senior Lecturer	91	38	29
Lecturer	211	104	33
Assistant Lecturer	47	21	31
Tutorial Fellow	90	56	38
Research Assistant	2	1	33

In Kenya, Onyongo (2007) found that men were promoted more quickly than women, especially in public universities even when they had joined the university at the same time and at the same rank. Table 8 shows that in 2009, female staff were mostly clustered at the lower academic levels. However, women comprised less than half of the assistant lecturers/tutorial fellows and research assistants. This suggests that the proportion of women in the senior ranks will not necessarily increase over time.

Source: Kenyatta University/FAWE, 2009.

To some extent the concentration of women in the lower academic ranks can be explained by the fact that they tend to take longer to complete their PhDs, spend less time on research and often have fewer publications (AAU, 2006). Some have argued that where there is competition for resources, women are less likely to have access to research tools such as computers (Campion and Shrum, 2004). Work-related travel, including fieldwork or participation in conferences, may also be problematic, especially for women with young families. In South Africa, junior female faculty were unable to achieve promotion without holding PhD degrees but the heavy teaching loads they were assigned as junior faculty members made it difficult for them to find the time to pursue doctoral studies. Some were hired as contract workers and were ineligible to accumulate time towards study leave (Mabokela, 2002).

Mabokela (2002) succinctly describes the problem faced by many junior female faculty members:

“Being acting heads of departments places these women in a cruel double bind. They must assume the additional administrative responsibilities of the chair without relief from their teaching loads, more remuneration, or the clarity of authority that would come with a permanent appointment. Most of them are still pursuing their master’s or PhD degrees, but they now have even less time to devote to their studies and research—the very factors that are crucial for promotion. As acting heads, they also have to make decisions that will affect their senior colleagues. If they offend these senior colleagues or make decisions that are unfavorable to them, they also risk their opportunity for promotion.”

Finally, not all women who achieve senior positions within the university structure do not necessarily want make it easier for other women to achieve similar status. In South Africa, Ismail (2007) found that female staff members were less critical of existing administrative structures once they began to have some success within the system. On the positive side, she attributes this to increased self-confidence, which in turn led to greater understanding of the institutional culture. She found that the presence of female academic leadership was a very positive factor. However, seen from a more negative light, it would appear that successful women did not turn their energies to improving the situation for other women academics.

The senior university management in most African institutions is overwhelmingly male (Mama, 2003). Grace Williams of Nigeria was appointed Vice Chancellor of the University of Benin in 1985 and Dorothy Limunga Njeuma served as Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea in Cameroon from 1993 until 2005. There have been other women appointed to the highest ranks at other African universities but they remain the exception. It may be that women who received higher education in the 1960s and 70s had less difficulty achieving higher positions in the university hierarchy since, at that time, there were relatively few qualified African men or women (Beoku-Betts, 2005). Seshamani and Shalumba (2011) report that since its founding 44 years ago, the University of Zambia has never had a female Vice Chancellor. A recent study of 117 universities in 15 countries of the SADC region found that there were only 11 female vice chancellors (10%. Madagascar, Seychelles and Tanzania each had one female Vice Chancellor; Zimbabwe had two and South Africa had six (Guramatunhu-Mudiwa, 2010). A Nigerian study found that since most Vice Chancellors were male, they did not even realise that gender discrimination was a problem within their institutions (quoted in Seshamani and Shalumba, 2011).

**Table 9: Composition of Senate and Senate Committees by Sex, Busitema University, Uganda, 2010**

Committee	Percentage Female	Chair
University Senate	29	F
Academic Affairs and Library	14	M
Admissions Board	13	M
Quality Assurance Committee	38	M

Table 9 presents data for a new university in Uganda, founded in 2007 and, which in 2010, had a female Vice Chancellor. Although the university has made efforts to ensure that women serve on prestigious senate committees, the percentages were still skewed heavily towards men and men chaired all senate committees.

Source: Kaasa-Bwanga/FAWE et al, 2010.

Since most female faculty members are at junior levels, they are usually unable to make an impact on university committees. Even if they have good ideas, their comments are not always taken seriously (Thanacoody et al, 2006; Mabokela, 2002). Research in Mauritius reported active resistance on the part of senior male faculty to concede decision-making power to female colleagues (Thanacoody et al, 2006). In Kenya, Onsongo (2007) recounts that the public universities often had a “hostile environment” for female academics. This included male intrusion in areas of responsibility, interruption of meetings run by women managers, political interference and sexual harassment. At the University of Ghana, women were denied participation in the most influential decision-making committees because admission into membership was hierarchical, based on academic position and length of service (Tsikata, 2007).

The situation appears to be better in some private (albeit smaller) universities. In Kenya, more women occupy senior academic positions in private universities and many stepped into senior posts after spending years in public universities without achieving promotion into senior ranks. Working relationships in private universities were reported to be more collegial and female faculty said that they had rapid access to university authorities, as required. Private universities also tend to have comparatively more women as heads of departments. However, most private universities focus only on undergraduate education and some are closely linked with religious organisations (Karram, 2011; Onsongo, 2007). Kwesiga (2011) notes that in Uganda, private universities based in rural areas have opened up opportunities for women both as students and faculty. However, she adds that research in the new universities is still at low levels and this will need strengthening as women social scientists are brought into academic life through this channel.

Finally, in Ghana, the University at Legon tried to be “gender neutral” in its promotion policies but this actually discriminated against women who often were several years behind their male colleagues in terms of degrees and publications because of time taken off for child-bearing and child-rearing (Tsikata, 2007).

## 5. Discussion

Based on a review of available literature, it is apparent why women are under-represented as students and researchers in the social sciences in Africa. They face obstacles at every stage of their academic careers from secondary school onwards and it is not surprising that they often become victims of the “leaky pipeline,” the term used internationally to describe the phenomenon of women dropping out of academic programmes at different stages along the way from undergraduate to senior researchers/professors. Although many universities have tried to create a more hospitable environment for female students and faculty members, there are still widespread reports of sexual harassment, of unequal treatment by university administrators and of societal pressures that make it difficult for women to advance as far as their capabilities might allow.

The literature overview of women university faculty and researchers in the social sciences has confirmed that most of them work under difficult circumstances. Universities are over-crowded and both male and female faculty members have heavy teaching loads. Many women have family responsibilities that make it difficult for them to pursue opportunities for further studies or to spend periods outside the country. Some spouses are not supportive. Women tend to publish less than men and take longer to finish their PhDs. This helps to justify the fact that they are promoted less rapidly and often remain junior members in prestigious university committees. The gender barriers faced by women in universities tend to be replicated in research institutions and think tanks.

Despite these problems, there are reasons for optimism. First, while the numbers of African women faculty members are still small, they are growing steadily, especially in the humanities and social sciences. As more women become prominent in universities, their presence there will be accepted and institutional cultures will have to change. Second, the presence of women’s and gender studies centres at universities across Africa has already led to the production of knowledge about the contribution of women to economic, social and political development. While much of this work has been written from a “women in development” stance, there is a growing body of research that takes a feminist, transformative point of view. Third, over the past decade, information communication technologies have become cheaper and widely available, enabling scholars to access library resources beyond those of their own institutions and also enabling them to publish and disseminate their own work more widely. For all scholars, the availability of cheap communication technologies is facilitating greater networking and collaboration and for female social scientists who may feel isolated or unsupported within their own institutions, the possibilities for positive affirmation through linkages with feminist researchers at other African universities are particularly beneficial. Information communication technologies can also be used as a vehicle for feminist mentoring.

Sections I and II have given a broad overview of the current status of African universities and the circumstances under which women faculty and students work. Conditions for both men and women are poor in most institutions, with heavy teaching loads, inadequate infrastructure, poor salaries and little time or resources for research. However, the overwhelmingly male bias of the universities makes it even more difficult for women to thrive. Section III presents original data on the research contributions of women in the social sciences.

### III. Contribution of Women to Social Sciences Research in Africa: The Data

#### Methodology

Several approaches were used to collect data for this study. Initially, the top international social sciences journals were examined based on rankings of the *Essential Science Indicators*.<sup>14</sup> Table 10 lists the top 20 social sciences journals between 1997 and 2007. Most of them do not focus on development issues. A spot analysis of several of these journals, searching for authors based in Africa, yielded little data.

**Table 10: Top International Social Sciences Journals, 1997-2007**

Rank	Journal	Citations	Rank	Journal	Citations
1	SOC SCI MED	42,554	11	PATIENT EDUC COUNS	8,395
2	J AMER GERIAT SOC	40,134	12	WORLD DEVELOP	8,321
3	MED CARE	25,630	13	J AMER MED INFORM ASSOC	8,030
4	J ADV NURS	18,316	14	CHILD ABUSE NEGLECT	7,989
5	HEALTH AFFAIR	17,324	15	J HUM EVOL	7,791
6	J STUD ALCOHOL	12,075	16	AMER J POLIT SCI	7,730
7	J SPEECH LANG HEAR RES	11,371	17	J GERONTOL SER B- PSYCHOL SCI	7,427
8	J MARRIAGE FAM	9,924	18	AMER POLIT SCI REV	7,250
9	AMER SOCIOL REV	9,542	19	ENVIRON PLAN A	7,149
10	HEALTH SERV RES	8,621	20	AMER J SOCIOL	7,092

Source: *Essential Science Indicators*.

The second approach entailed the examination of a few international journals that deal directly with development issues. Two of the journals on the “top journals” list – *Social Science and Medicine* and *World Development* – were included in this exercise. All the journals in this category were searched comprehensively for the years 2001-2010 inclusive.

The third strategy entailed a comprehensive search of all journals published by some key African social science research organisations: CODESRIA, OSSREA and the African Development Bank.<sup>15</sup> In some cases, not all archival copies of journals were available online but all those that were available online were included in the search. Books and monographs published by CODESRIA and OSSREA were also included.

<sup>14</sup> *Essential Science Indicators* is a compilation of performance statistics and trends based on journal article publication counts and citation data from across Thomson Reuters Science databases.

<sup>15</sup> Of course, the African Development Bank is not a social sciences organisation but it produces an important journal, *African Development Review*, and commissions many studies with social sciences components.

The fourth strategy entailed the use of the Scopus library database to identify social sciences publications produced by staff at a selection of African universities, including a few small ones and some larger ones.<sup>16</sup> Using Scopus, it was possible to search the social sciences database for articles published between 2005 and 2010 by authors who were affiliated with specific institutions. This proved to be the single most valuable source of information.

### Methodological Caveats

The Scopus social sciences database includes journals in subjects like linguistics. All journals in the Scopus database under the social sciences selection were included in the search. Consequently, some of the authors included in the data presented below may have published in linguistics or in literature. However, Scopus has a separate selection for “Arts and Humanities” so it is likely that most of the researchers captured in the “Social Sciences” search were publishing in social sciences rather than arts and humanities.

Since the focus of this study was on social policy research, some journals that specialise in the technical aspects of physical geography, environment, agriculture and health were eliminated. However, journals that deal with the social or policy impact of these topics were included. Thus, for example, *Social Sciences and Medicine* was included while journals dealing directly with the biophysical side of health research were eliminated. The Scopus database separates economics and finance journals from other social sciences journals and they were not included in the analysis. The inclusion or elimination of journals was not an exact science but since the overall objective of the search was to identify the comparative participation of Africa-based male and female researchers in the social sciences, the elimination of some journals and inclusion of others was not considered to be of critical importance. It was most important to keep comparative lists of male and female publication, which was done rigorously throughout the data collection process.

Based on Christian names, the sex of an author was not always immediately apparent. In cases of doubt, the author’s name was googled and, frequently, further biographical information and/or Facebook images identified them as male or female. However, some authors were identified only with first initials and it was impossible to determine their sex. Such cases have been captured in the data as “Sex unknown.”

No effort was made to differentiate between African and expatriate authors. If an author was based at an institution located in Africa, then they were counted as “African” for the purposes of this study.

Part of the study included a literature search for social sciences publications based in some African universities chosen because they were collaborating with PASGR in 2011. They included: University of Botswana, University of Ghana, Legon, University of Cape Coast, Egerton University, Maseno University, Eduardo Mondlane University, University of Ibadan, University of Jos, University of Lagos, National University of Rwanda, University of Sierra Leone, University of Dar es Salaam and Makerere University. While this selection includes representative universities in most of sub-Saharan Africa, it has significant omissions including South Africa and Francophone Africa.

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<sup>16</sup> Scopus is a bibliographic database that covers nearly 18,000 titles from more than 5,000 international publishers in the scientific, technical, medical and social sciences fields.



Finally, the data presented in this study consistently shows that women have fewer publications than men. However, far fewer women than men are engaged as university faculty members and researchers. Given this disproportionate gender balance, it is not surprising that women publish less. A bibliometric study of the type undertaken here cannot determine the absolute numbers of male and female social science faculty members and researchers in African institutions and conclude that either men or women are more productive scholars. However, the data in this study does indicate areas in which women tend to concentrate and areas in which they are particularly weak.

## Publication in International Journals

**Table 11: Relative Publication Rates of Africa-based Male and Female Authors, International Journals, 2001-2010**

An examination of the contribution of Africa-based female authors to international journals (Table 11) reveals that the *African Studies Review* and *Social Science and Medicine* have relatively high levels of contribution from Africa-based women while the others all have less than 20% female contribution.

Journal	Dates	Total Number of Authors	Male Authors (%)	Female Authors (%)	Sex Unknown (%)
<b>African Study Monographs</b>	2001-2010	62	80.6	17.7	1.7
<b>African Studies Review*</b>	2005-2010	15	60	40	0
<b>Development and Change</b>	2001-2010	17	94.1	5.9	0
<b>Social Science and Medicine**</b>	2001-2010	358	50.3	38.3	11.4
<b>World Development</b>	2001-2010	106	82.1	17	0.9

\* Online archives begin in 2005.

\*\* Social Science and Medicine incorporates six sub-journals so each issue includes more contributions than the typical journal.

The high proportion of women contributing to *Social Science and Medicine* is particularly interesting because the journal covers a wide range of topics from health policy and gender issues, to the social aspects of biophysical research.

## Publication in Africa-based Journals

Female publication rates in CODESRIA journals are also low (Table 12). Women are especially under-represented in political science. The *African Journal of International Affairs* and *Identity, Culture and Politics* both had very low levels of female participation while *African Media Review* and *African Anthropologist* had relatively higher rates. The absolute number of authors for *African Anthropologist* is very small.

**Table 12: Relative Publication Rates of Africa-based Male and Female Authors, CODESRIA Journals, 2001-2010**

Journal	Dates	Total Number of Africa-based Authors	Male Authors (%)	Female Authors (%)	Sex Unknown (%)
Africa Development	2007-2010	54	87	11.1	1.9
Africa Sociological Review	2006-2010	70	75.7	21.4	2.8
African Anthropologist	2007	9	55.6	44.4	0
African Journal of International Affairs	2001-2008	43	95.3	4.7	0
African Media Review	2004-2008	31	64.5	35.5	0
Afrika Zamani	2001-2008	22	81.8	18.2	0
Identity, Culture and Politics	2004-2009-2010	11	100	0	0
Journal of Higher Education in Africa	2004-2009	74	73.8	26.2	0
CODESRIA Books *	2001-2010	179	77.1	16.8	6.1
CODESRIA Monographs	2001-2010	40	80	20	0

\* The list includes only books published by individual and/or groups of authors. It does not include books published by organisations. In cases where both English and French versions were published, only the English title is counted.

The female publication rate in OSSREA journals is equally poor (Table 13). Since the mid-1990s, OSSREA has published a selection of final reports from its Social Sciences Research and Gender Research competitions, but most of the monographs available online do not include the names of authors so it is impossible to judge the comparative publication rates for men and women. There are no books by women among the 13 published titles listed on OSSREA's website and only 10% of the articles featured between 2007-2010, in its triennial bulletin, were written by women.

**Table 13: Comparative Publication Rates of Male and Female Authors, OSSREA Journals, 2002-2010**

Journal	Dates	Total Number of Authors	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unknown (%)
East Africa Social Sciences Research Review	2002-2010	97	79.4	15.5	5.1
Gender Issues Report Series	2001-2006	13	46.2	53.8	0
Books	2001-2007	13	100	0	0
Bulletins	2007-2010	40	87.5	10	2.5

**Table 14: Comparative Publication Rates of Africa-Based Male and Female Authors, African Development Review, 2001-2010**

Journal	Dates	Total Number of Authors	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unknown (%)
African Development Review	2001-2010	173	87.3	11.6	1.1

Women authors are even less evident in the *African Development Review*, the journal of the African Development Bank (Table 14). Over a ten-year period only 11.6% of the contributions came from female authors.

### **Publication Rates of Men and Women in Selected African Universities**

As seen in Table 15 below, comparative male and female publication rates in African universities follow the general pattern described above but there are some interesting anomalies. For example, Kenyatta University, alone among the universities in the table, has a higher publication rate for females than for males – 52% vs 48%. The comparative male/female publication rates for the other Kenyan universities are much like those of other African universities and this leads to questions about why Kenyatta University is different: Is there a higher proportion of female faculty members? Are there special programmes in place to encourage female research and publication? Is the academic climate at Kenyatta University more friendly and accommodating towards female staff? Are there a few high-powered women who mentor and encourage other women to publish? The answers to these questions are beyond the scope of the current study but a case study of Kenyatta University with a focus on best practices could lead to some useful information.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 15: Comparative Social Sciences Publication Rates, PASGR Partner Institutions (Male/Female/ Sex Unknown), 2005-2010**

Country	Institution	Male Publications (%)	Female Publications (%)	Sex Unknown (%)	Collaboration (%)
Botswana	University of Botswana	70.9	24.7	4.4	27.9
Ethiopia	University of Addis Ababa	95.1	4.9		43.9
Ghana	University of Ghana, Legon	78.8	21.1		33.1
	University of Cape Coast	88.4	11.6		51.1
Kenya	Egerton University	77.1	20	2.9	48.6

<sup>17</sup> FAWE commissioned a baseline survey of gender composition of management, staff and students at Kenyatta University in 2009.

	University of Nairobi	80.3	19.7		50
	Kenyatta University	48	52		36
	Maseno University	74.6	16.4	9	34.3
	Moi University	75.8	24.2		24.2
Mozambique	Eduardo Mondlane University	71.4	28.6		64.3
Nigeria	University of Ibadan	65.9	26.8	7.3	26.8
	University of Jos	75	18.8	6.2	43.7
	University of Lagos	73	20.6	6.3	41.3
	Obafemi Owolowo University	79	14.4	6.6	20.3
Rwanda	National University of Rwanda	90	10.0		60.0
Sierra Leone	University of Sierra Leone	75.5	25.5		0
Tanzania	University of Dar es Salaam	74.6	22.5	2.8	36.6
Uganda	Makerere University	71.6	27.0	1.4	38.5

Source: SCOPUS data analysis, 2005-2010.

Aside from Kenyatta University, the highest rates of female publication are at Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique (28.6%) and Makerere University (27%). It is interesting to note that Makerere still has a relatively low female publication rate despite the affirmative action efforts that have been underway for almost two decades. Similarly, the University of Dar es Salaam has only a 22.5% female publication rate despite its efforts to enhance the presence of females in its programmes.

There does not seem to be a tendency for women in some regions to be consistently better published than women in other regions. To the extent that such assertions can be made, it could be speculated that some universities have higher proportions of published female social scientists than others. However, it would be necessary to have data on the comparative sizes of departments at different universities and to know what proportion of their social sciences staff are male and female to draw any real conclusions.

### Research Institutes and Think Tanks Based in Africa

Until 2002, the AAU sponsored a Research Report series that focussed on different aspects of higher education. Data for 2001-2002 reveals that women were reasonably well-represented (Table 16). However, Table 17, which relates to articles published in the journal *Cahiers Africains d'Administration Publique/African Administrative Studies* that is produced by the African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development <http://www.cafrad.org/>, again reveals a strong male bias.

**Table 16: Comparative Publication Rates of Africa-based Male and Female Authors, AAU Research Report Series, 2001-2002**

Journal	Dates	Total Number of Authors	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unknown (%)
AAU Research Report Series	2001-2002	23	60.9	39.1	0.0

**Table 17: Comparative Publication Rates of Africa-based Male and Female Authors, African Administrative Studies, 2008-2009**

Journal	Dates	Total Number of Authors	Male (%)	Female (%)	Unknown (%)
Cahiers Africains d'Administration Publique / African Administrative Studies	2008-2009	38	86.8	13.1	0.0

### Where Are Africa-based Social Scientists Publishing?

In order to determine where Africa-based social scientists are publishing, lists were made of all the journals in which researchers at PASGR's collaborating universities published. The list included 320 journals (Appendix 1). It was possible to identify the geographical location of the editorial base of 281 of these journals. This information is given in Table 18.

**Table 18: Geographical Editorial Base of Journals Published in By Social Scientists at Selected African Universities**

UK	EUROPE	US/ CANADA	MIDDLE EAST	ASIA/ PACIFIC	LATIN AMERICA	AFRICA
112	26	101	4	20	1	17
Total Number of Journals 281						

Journals based in the United Kingdom drew the largest number of authors from Anglophone Africa, followed closely by journals based in the United States or

Canada. The majority of the African journals represented in Table 18 are based in South Africa. Table 19 reveals that although there were slightly more journals based in the UK in the overall data set, female social scientists were somewhat more likely to publish in the US and Canada.

**Table 19: Geographical Editorial Base of Journals Published in by Female Social Scientists in Selected Institutions**

UK	Europe	US/Canada	Middle East	Asia	Latin America	Africa
		CANADA		PACIFIC		
61	23	69	8	15	0	26
Total Number of Female Researchers 202						

### Research Topics Chosen by Male and Female Social Scientists

In an effort to determine whether males and females chose different research topics, the titles of all papers published in 2010 by researchers based at the selected institutions were analysed. Table 20 provides information on the numbers of papers and the comparative publication rates of males and females. A separate column lists papers published jointly by teams that included at least one author of either sex.

**Table 20: Papers Published by Researchers at Selected Institutions, 2010**

Papers Published by Male Authors	Papers Published by Female Authors	Papers Published by Male/Female Teams	Total Number of Papers Published
121 (74.7%)	21 (13.0%)	20 (12.3%)	162

Men were much more likely to publish alone or with other male authors while women published almost as many papers collaboratively with male authors as they did on their own or with other women.

Table 21 provides an overview of the topics of the 162 papers, analysed by gender. It is noteworthy that 5 of the 21 papers – almost

one quarter - published by women focussed on aspects of gender. Among the male researchers, 32 (26.4%) published on aspects of education, compared with only 3 women (14.2%). Both men and women were active in the field of librarianship but men were much more prominent in public administration (7.4%) and politics (5.8%). The overall numbers are too small to draw definitive conclusions but the general trends support the earlier assertions about the differences in research interests of male and female social scientists.

**Table 21: Research Topics of Social Scientists in Selected Institutions, 2010**

Topic	Male Authors	Female Authors	Joint Male/Female Authors
African history/ Traditional culture/ Linguistics	6	3	
Development studies	3	1	2
Education			
Adult education	2		
Higher education	8	1	1
Primary/ Secondary education	15	1	2
Professional education	1		
Teacher education	6	1	1
Environmental planning	6	1	
Gender	3	5	2
HIV/Sexuality	6	2	
Industrial development/design	3		
Information, Communication Technology	6	1	2
Land tenure	2		
Legal studies	2		
Librarianship	6	3	4
Micro-credit, rural economics	2		
Migration	2		1
Politics	7		
Population	6		2
Poverty reduction	2	1	
Public administration	9		1
Research methodology	4		
Social policy	2		
Tourism	6	1	2
Urban studies	5		

Finally, as seen in Table 22, few women are lead authors in jointly published papers. Only the Universities of Botswana and Ghana had more than four female lead authors. Neither the University of Dar es Salaam nor Makerere University fared well in this indicator.

**Table 22: Female Lead Authors, Selected Institutions, 2005-2010**

University	Female Lead Authors
Ibadan	4
Jos	0
Lagos	n/a*
Ghana	9
Cape Coast	0
Sierra Leone	0
Egerton	1
Maseno	4
Makerere	1
Dar es Salaam	1
Eduardo Mondlane	0
Rwanda	0
Botswana	10

\* Authors used initials and sex was unknown

## Discussion

The overview of research productivity of women social scientists in African universities has confirmed findings reported from the literature. Although the in-depth analysis focussed only on PASGR's collaborating universities, it provides some insight into patterns of publication.<sup>18</sup> Women publish significantly less than men but because they are fewer in number this does not necessarily indicate lower productivity. Men are more likely to publish alone or in collaboration with other male researchers while women are more likely to publish collaboratively, sometimes with men and sometimes with other women. Choice of research topics often differs and women are more likely to focus on issues related to gender. Makerere University and the University of Dar es Salaam (which received special attention since they are PASGR partners), both have had affirmative action programmes for almost two decades but this does not seem to have any impact on the extent to which the female researchers in those institutions achieved publications visibility. Finally, women have very little visibility in the journals sponsored by CODESRIA and OSSREA. The next section looks more closely at the organisational culture of these institutions.

<sup>18</sup> It is possible that publication patterns may have been different if universities from South Africa and Francophone Africa had been included in the analysis, rather than only the PASGR partners.



## IV. Organisational Culture of the Social Sciences in Africa

### Editorial Boards

Although most academic journals use anonymous reviewers, referees bring their own preferences and biases to the task. Given the differences in topic choices and approaches discussed above, it is possible that journals with predominantly male editorial boards may be less open to topics that are of interest to female researchers, particularly those related to gender and feminist critiques. Tables 23 and 24 reveal the extent to which (in 2011) the editorships and editorial boards of all the CODESRIA journals were dominated by men. Some of the editorial board members, both male and female, were based in institutions outside Africa (which is justifiable as a means of ensuring that African journals become part of the broader literature in their fields).

**Table 23: Gender Representation on Editorial Boards of CODESRIA Journals, 2011**

CODESRIA Journals	Editorial Board Members		Percentage Female
	Males	Females	
<b>Africa Development</b>	19	6	22.2
<b>Afrika Zamani</b>	12	4	22.2
<b>Identity, Culture and Politics</b>	9	3	21.4
<b>African Anthropologist</b>	12	7	28,0
<b>African Sociological Review</b>	14	5	25.0
<b>African Journal of International Affairs</b>	13	2	10.5
<b>African Media Review</b>	17	3	17.4
<b>Journal of Higher Education in Africa</b>	13	6	27.3

It is likely that the majority of decisions about which articles to send for review and to whom they should be sent, are made by the journal editors rather than the editorial boards. In 2011, only 2 of the 27 editors of CODESRIA journals were female. Interestingly, one of the two journals with a female editor, *African Media Review*, had the second highest number of acceptances from female authors (35.5%) according to the figures provided earlier in Table 12. However, the highest proportion of female authors (44.4%) was in the *African Anthropologist*, which had no female editors. The *African Journal of International Affairs*, which has an overwhelmingly male editorial staff and board, only accepted 4.7% of its articles from female authors.

**Table 24: Gender Representation of Editors of CODESRIA Journals, 2011**

CODESRIA Journals	Editors/ Managing Editors/ Book Review Editors		Percentage Female
	Males	Females	
<b>Africa Development</b>	2		0
<b>Afrika Zamani</b>	2		0
<b>Identity, Culture and Politics</b>	2		0
<b>African Anthropologist</b>	6		0
<b>African Sociological Review</b>	4	1	20.0
<b>African Journal of International Affairs</b>	4		0
<b>African Media Review</b>	2	1	33.3
<b>Journal of Higher Education in Africa</b>	3		0

Women were even less present on the editorial staff/ board of the AfDB's *African Development Review* (14.3%), and the *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review* (none) (Table 25). According to the figures presented earlier in Tables 13 and 14, women comprised 11.6% of the authors in the *African Development Review* and 15.5% of authors in the *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review*.

**Table 25: Gender Representation as Editors and on Editorial Boards in Other Africa-based Social Science Journals, 2011**

Other Africa-based Social Sciences Journals	Editors/ Managing Editors/ Book Review Editors		Editorial Board Members		Percentage Female
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
<b>African Development Review</b>	14	4	16	1	14.3
<b>Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review</b>	1	0	8	0	0.0

Of course, it should not be concluded that articles by female African researchers are being rejected systematically. Much more subtle processes are at work. Female researchers may hesitate to submit their work to certain journals, thinking that their work will not be accepted. They may think that their research topics are not consistent with those published by the journals. Moreover, journal editors often invite contributions from scholars they consider to be doing interesting work. If women are not part of the workshops, seminars and professional networks where such “interesting work” is discussed and where invitations are issued or if they are marginalised because they are seen as “junior” or “unknown”, then they are unlikely to be encouraged to submit to the journals. Networking is an important component of receiving academic recognition.

### **Participation in Social Sciences Governing Councils**

The small representation of women in the governing structures of social sciences organisations in Africa parallels their lack of presence in journals and editorial boards. These statistics are important because they reinforce the marginalisation of female social scientists.<sup>19</sup> If few women hold leadership positions in the continent’s premier social science organisations, then the underlying message is that these institutions are strongholds of male power. If one or two women are admitted into the higher-level decision-making bodies, it is unlikely that they will feel sufficiently empowered to be able to change the culture of the organisations, even if they feel that the culture should be changed. Some may feel that they were able to achieve success in spite of the odds against them and that others should do the same.

#### **CODESRIA**

In 2011, the Executive Committee of CODESRIA comprised seven men (including the chair) and three women. The Scientific Committee also comprised seven men and three women (including the President). The CODESRIA Executive Secretary was male and his five predecessors since CODESRIA’s establishment in 1973 have all been male.<sup>20</sup>

#### **OSSREA**

The OSSREA Executive Council included four men and three women in 2011. The Executive Secretary was male, like all his predecessors. Nineteen of OSSREA’s Liaison Officers, based on university campuses throughout the region, were male; five were female.

OSSREA’s current Executive Director is aware of and concerned about the under-representation of female social scientists in the organisation. Two of the recent former Presidents were female but, in general, it has proved difficult to attract women into leadership positions in the organisation:

“Like in many organizations of this nature, the electoral processes and the whole management culture is masculine. Very few women have the appetite for the macho politics that go on in the organizations as groups fight for power and resources. Hence very few of them come forward to be elected or to be selected for top posts. Prior to 2008 elections were 'organized', cvs peddled around as the groups in power struggled for their self-perpetuation. This was stopped in 2010 when new election rules were put in place” (Mihyo, 2011).

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<sup>19</sup> All the statistical data discussed here is based on information that was available on the websites of the organisations in mid-2011.

<sup>20</sup> Repeated efforts were made to contact CODESRIA to learn of any on-going activities or plans to increase the participation of women, but no response was received.

OSSREA has undertaken targeted affirmative action to increase the participation of women in its governance structures. According to new rules that were put in place in 2010, the organisation now works with a system of electoral colleges for Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. Each college elects two members to the Executive Council, one of whom must be female. All members of the Executive Council are eligible to stand for President and Vice President. The Annual Congress is attended by three delegates from each country chapter and at least one of them should be female.

OSSREA has also made attempts to bring women into its editorial boards but it has proved difficult. According to the Executive Director:

“... several persons (women) approached have been reluctant to accept responsibility without tangible incentives for the work that the board members carry out. To increase interest in such roles especially for those already overburdened, there is need for incentives. In addition, editorial work is not easy to quantify for purposes of staff appraisal. For those who are already struggling to publish in order not to perish, such unquantifiable roles are less attractive” (Mihyo, 2011).

Since many women academics are already overburdened with university and family responsibilities, they may simply lack the time to become involved with additional voluntary activities. One solution proposed by the OSSREA Executive Director would be for such voluntary editorial activity to count as a criterion for promotion in the region’s universities.

Finally, the OSSREA Executive Committee is aware of the low publication rate of women in its journals but the Executive Director feels that this reflects the reality in the region rather than an inbuilt bias towards female authors, i.e. there simply are not many female social scientists. He notes:

“Our recent study in seven countries in the region shows that the number of female professors in the region has been going down. Together with it is the number of female PhD holders. Our study shows that the averages have been going down to below 5% in most universities. In addition, there are no research degrees in universities in the region and capacity for research is not built through the university education system. This leads to the survival of those with more time and better connections to enable them to acquire research capacity and visibility” (Mihyo, 2011).

The lack of capacity of the region’s universities to produce PhD level graduates is a significant problem. For example, a recent scoping study carried out on behalf of OSSREA found that even at the University of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia’s oldest and most prestigious institution of higher learning, only 25% of Ethiopian faculty members hold PhD degrees (Moges, 2011). In Kenya, at the University of Nairobi, 46% of faculty members hold PhD degrees but women with doctorate degrees comprise only 10% of the faculty (Opata, 2011). Moreover, most social sciences doctoral programmes in Kenyan universities are under-staffed, placing heavy burdens on faculty members who already have teaching and committee responsibilities and often undertake consultancies or teach at several far-flung institutions in order to earn enough money to support their families.

### ***Africa Governance Institute (AGI)***

The Africa Governance Institute (<http://www.iag-agi.org/spip/Background.html>), established in 2008, is recognised as a Centre of Excellence by the African Union and was conceived as a centre for high-level political dialogue, advanced studies and training on governance in Africa.

Its activities, which in 2011 were still getting underway, will include advocacy for democratic and developmental governance in Africa; cutting-edge research and innovative training methods designed to find solutions to the most pressing governance issues identified in political dialogue sessions, and dissemination/diffusion of relevant information on governance in Africa.

**Table 26: Gender Representation in the Africa Governance Institute, 2011**

	Male	Female	Percent Female
Governing Council	6	3	33.0
Executive Secretariat	1		0.0
Africa-based Experts	39	5	11.0

AGI is based in Dakar and has the status of an international African organisation. Its website already lists a sizeable roster of experts, based in Africa and elsewhere that can be called upon to work on a wide variety of governance-related topics.<sup>21</sup> Table 26 presents relevant gender information. Again, the lack of strong female participation is conspicuous.

***Gender Activities of CODESRIA, OSSREA and the African Association of Universities***

Donors have been emphasising the need to integrate women into all aspects of African development since the 1980s and substantial funds have been made available for this purpose. Over the past 30 years, a critical mass of African gender advocates has emerged. Both CODESRIA and OSSREA have sponsored gender research competitions for many years. CODESRIA organises an annual Gender Symposium in Cairo, always with a topical theme.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, every year since 1994, CODESRIA has organised a Gender Institute that brings together 12 to 15 researchers for a period of four weeks to talk about a specific topic.<sup>23</sup> The Gender Institute aims to contribute to greater awareness of gender issues in African social research, to ensure the integration of gender analysis into social research in Africa, and to promote the inclusion of gender approaches in social science debates on methodology.

Similarly, OSSREA has emphasised gender research and training since the early 1990s. Annual gender research competitions have been held since 1988 and a large number of male and female academics have been supported to do gender research. A 2011 call for participants in a gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting training workshop identified gender as a focal area for OSSREA. The organisation has conducted research, provided grants for academics and researchers to carry out research and publish books and scientific articles, and offered training on various gender issues in the region (<http://www.ossrea.net/images/stories/ossrea/call-for-gender-training.pdf>). In 2011, it had a call for proposals to develop teaching/reference materials and modules on gender issues for post-graduate gender studies programmes in sub-Saharan Africa’s higher learning institutions.

<sup>21</sup> These include democratic governance, economic and financial governance; e-governance; corporate governance; environmental and national resources governance; developmental governance; and miscellaneous topics.

<sup>22</sup> The 2011 theme was Gender and the Media in Africa and the 2012 theme was Gender and Climate Change.

<sup>23</sup> In 2009, the topic was Gender and Higher Education in Africa. The theme for 2013 will be African Sexualities: Theories, Practice, Action.

Given this concentration on gender issues over a period of at least two decades, it is surprising that the CODESRIA and OSSREA journals publish relatively few women authors. The gender activities undertaken by the two organisations seem not to have been well integrated into the overall work of the institutions.

### ***Association of African Universities (AAU)***

In 2006, the Working Group on Higher Education of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) collaborated with the Association of African Universities (AAU) to develop a Toolkit for Mainstreaming Gender in Higher Education in Africa, in response to a felt need to bridge persistent gender gaps in tertiary education institutions in Africa (<http://www2.aau.org/wghe/gender/toolkit/Tooltik-complete.pdf>). The Toolkit, written by African researchers and specialists, is available in English, French and Portuguese and comprises ten modules and a literature review. The modules cover: basic facts about gender; forming policies and strategies; the role of human resources development and management; mainstreaming gender in the curriculum; research and gender-sensitive research methods; faculty and support programmes; student access and retention; gender violence and sexual harassment; disaggregated data; and resource mobilisation for gender equity. The toolkit is well-written, thorough, and an excellent source of information and ideas.

It is likely that much of the material covered in the AAU module will be covered again in the planned OSSREA publication. There may be a good justification for a second set of modules, but it also suggests a lack of synergy around gender research and gender issues in the African context. While modules and toolkits are of critical importance, they can be produced relatively painlessly. The much more difficult task is for them to be used in a strategic way to change gender biases within African institutions.

## **V. Measures to Redress the Gender Imbalance: What Works?**

There is no single formula for improving the gender balance in social sciences research and training in Africa but the initiatives described below are all contributing to this objective.

### **OSSREA**

The on-going efforts of OSSREA to improve the participation of women in its work have already been discussed. Perhaps most importantly in the case of OSSREA, senior management has recognised that gender imbalance is a problem and has agreed to take action. The Executive Director and Executive Council agreed that female participation would be improved only if the organisation adopted specific rules mandating the involvement of women. Since the rules were adopted only in 2010, it is too early to judge their effectiveness but they bode well for the future.

### **AERC**

In recent years, AERC has undertaken several actions. They developed a gender policy to govern their overall activities (Lyakurwa, 2010). In 2010, they commissioned four studies that examined the participation of women in economics graduate education and research in East

Africa, Nigeria, West Africa and Southern Africa.<sup>24</sup> The aim of the studies was to take stock of the number of graduate women in the AERC network of university departments, research institutes and central bank departments network and assess their qualifications; bring to light specific or special areas of research that may attract women scholars in the research and training programmes of AERC; establish the factors contributing to the low participation of women in economic policy and graduate training in sub-Saharan Africa; suggest ways in which AERC can contribute to ameliorating the situation; and recommend proactive measures to increase the number of female economists participating in AERC activities.

Further, in 2010, AERC was successful in obtaining a grant of US\$778,374 from the Swedish International Development Agency to fund women's participation in thematic research, technical workshops, institutional attachments and AERC's Collaborative PhD programme. The anticipated result will be a strong increase in women's participation in economic research and training in sub-Saharan Africa (AERC, 2011). Again it is too early to assess whether these actions will have a positive impact, but they hold promise.

### **Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)**

FAWE is a pan-African non-governmental organisation working in 32 African countries to empower girls and women through gender-responsive education. FAWE encourages governments, international organisations and local communities to enact policies and provide positive learning environments that treat girls and boys equally. FAWE has undertaken numerous initiatives aimed at enhancing the participation of African women in higher education. Current research seeks to determine gender trends in staff recruitment, promotion and retention in universities; influence policy makers and administrators to take action on the gender gaps in employment and leadership identified within their institutions; monitor, track and report on implementation of proposed gender-responsive actions; improve the capacity of women academics and managers to advocate and influence institutional leadership for greater gender equality; and facilitate women's access and promotion to leadership and management positions in universities.

FAWE is making an important contribution by producing data and think pieces on the under-representation of women in higher education. Without concrete data, it is difficult to convince policy makers of the need for change.

### **Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD)**

The Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) was created in 1977 in Dakar to do research, advocacy and training aimed at improving the status of women and transforming gender relations in Africa. A recent AAWORD newsletter recalled:

“AAWORD, the first continental organization of women researchers was born in a particular context marked by the domination of the African knowledge by the Western knowledge also called universal knowledge. The roadmap assigned to the organization, among others, is to create a powerful movement of African women researchers able to conduct research, training

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<sup>24</sup> Ngugi, Rose, Mary Mbithi and Esther Katerrega, Hamza. Women in Graduate Training and Economic Research in East Africa. AERC Paper No. SP 43; Kassey Garba, P. and Abdul-Ganiyu Garba. Women in Economic Research and Graduate Training in Nigeria. AERC Paper No. SP 44; Ancharaz, Vinaye. Women in Economic Research and Graduate Training in Southern Africa. AERC Paper No. SP 45; Oduro, Abena D. Women in Economic Research and Graduate Training in West Africa. AERC Paper No. SP 46.

and lobbying to initiate positive and sustainable change on the African continent” (AAWORD Echo, 2011).

AAWORD’s current areas of focus are gender and economic justice, gender and political participation, youth training, feminist research and advocacy. There are chapters throughout Africa, and in 2011 AAWORD sponsored training workshops in Tanzania, Nigeria, Zambia, Kenya and Cameroon to build feminist social sciences research capacity among young researchers. AAWORD was very prominent in the 1980s and 90s and has made a major contribution to building a critical mass of feminist Africans in the 1980s and 90s and played an important role in building up research capacity among young African women. It has been less visible in recent years, perhaps because of difficulty in securing funding for its programmes.

AAWORD issues a quarterly bilingual newsletter, each issue dedicated to a specific theme and also has a number of other publications, including an Occasional Paper Series; a Bibliographic Series (annotated bibliographies); and the AAWORD Journal. Unfortunately, the AAWORD publications are not downloadable or easily available on the internet.

## **VI. Potential Activities to Support the Participation of Women in African Social Sciences Research**

It is evident that there is a huge gender gap in social sciences research in Africa and that the existing organisational structures of universities, research institutions and social sciences organisations are not conducive to changing this situation in the near future. The affirmative action activities undertaken by several universities have not made an obvious difference in enhancing the participation of women and the focus on gender issues that is articulated by social sciences research organisations has not yet translated into the development of gender-sensitive board structures or editorial processes.

On the other hand, there are a growing number of trained and articulate female social scientists, many of whom have the potential to act as role models for female students and junior researchers. In time, as the critical mass of female social scientists grows, they will make their way into existing male networks and find a more powerful voice.

Social sciences organisations and universities in Africa have the potential to accelerate this process by undertaking a set of strategic activities. In each case, their first step should be to establish a gender policy to guide their work.

### **Recommendations for Social Sciences Organisations**

**1. Gender Policy.** Social sciences organisations should establish gender policies outlining their commitment to improving the participation of women in African social sciences and indicating the gender goals they hope to achieve within specific time frameworks. The existence of such policies with specific indicators will ensure accountability over time and provide a framework against which progress can be measured.

**2. Confidence-building among female social scientists.** The data shows that Africa-based women publish less than their male colleagues (of course, the pool of African women social scientists is also much smaller). However, those who do publish are less likely to be lead



authors in collaborative articles. There are various reasons why African women are less likely to be lead authors (e.g. for cultural reasons, they may defer to senior male colleagues even if their own contribution to the work is greater) but it is likely that many lack confidence to publish their work. Although the reasons for such lack of confidence are rooted in the structural and institutional elements that were elaborated in the literature review, a few activities can be undertaken to help female social scientists to gain requisite knowledge and experience.

**Create a network of female social scientists.** Research networks can be formed around specific topics or problems or around a more general theme such as capacity building or knowledge sharing. An African social sciences organisation could establish a network of Africa-based female social scientists working on social policy issues. The opportunity for the development of a research network is enhanced by the increased access to the internet. The organisation could put up a website aimed specifically at female social scientists, at creating a sense of community among them and providing helpful tools and guidelines. Relevant articles and materials could be posted regularly and one section could be dedicated to the celebration of members' achievements. For example, when network members have articles accepted for publication, it could be mentioned on the website. The network could meet physically once a year for a three-day conference, allowing members to present papers and receive constructive feedback from their colleagues. Each physical meeting could also include information sessions about academic publishing and possibly writing workshops.

**Mentorship.** An African social sciences organisation could set up an electronic feminist mentorship programme. Young researchers could be linked with older, more experienced ones who would be willing to read their work on a regular basis and give comments and suggestions. Both mentors and mentees could be members of the female social sciences network discussed above. Given the poor economic conditions under which many African professors work, it may be necessary to provide an honorarium to some senior mentors but this would be money well spent if the mentors are able to give practical, timely advice to young scholars.

**Female scholars in the diaspora.** Female social scientists originally from Africa may have a particular interest in mentoring young female scholars from their country of origin. Again, this could be organised electronically by an African social sciences organisation.

**Involvement of recently-retired social scientists, worldwide.** Many recently-retired social scientists, worldwide, may be willing to provide guidance, electronically, to young female social scientists in Africa. Again, they would be able to read drafts of work in progress, advise on potential journals where work could be accepted, etc. A general call could be sent through development studies listservs asking for volunteers to mentor young female social scientists.

**3. Training in social sciences writing for publication.** The literature review emphasised the lack of experience of many young African scholars with writing for publication. Indeed, it is likely that many young scholars do research but do not have the necessary experience or expertise to turn their work into publishable articles. While such training is necessary for both male and female social scientists, African social sciences organisations should organise a few writing workshops specifically for women since they are more disadvantaged.

**Organise writing workshops at conferences.** As already discussed, writing workshops could be set up at an annual meeting of female social scientists.

**Electronic workshops.** Modules could be produced on how to prepare research results for publication, how to identify the most appropriate journals, how to deal with comments from reviewers, etc.

**Special relationships.** Special relationships could be established with a few select institutions like Makerere Institute of Social Research. These research institutions could organise writing workshops and possibly manage a mentoring website.

**4. Strategic targeting of specific African social science organisations and journals.** The participation of women in the governance structures of African social sciences organisations and in the editorial committees of social sciences journals is particularly low. This is unlikely to change without specific targeted efforts.

**Target journals to publish articles by women.** Some Africa-based journals could be approached and asked to try to ensure that they publish a higher proportion of female authors. It is likely that most male journal editors have not even noticed that they publish few women and, if this fact were brought to their attention, some would be willing to correct the imbalance. This targeting of journals should be done only after the writing workshops have been held, to ensure that articles are of a high quality.

**Valorise the topics of interest to women.** African social sciences organisations should ensure that they are aware of potential reviewer biases and support work on research topics and methodologies that are reflective of the research interests of both male and female social scientists.

**5. Increase opportunities for women in research programmes and courses.** African social sciences organisations should ensure that research teams that undertake commissioned studies on their behalf include both male and female social scientists and that female social scientists sometimes serve as team leaders. They should also ensure that courses and training opportunities are given to women as well as men. In some cases, it may be necessary to actively solicit female participation.

**6. Support sabbatical placements for women.** African social sciences organisations could provide competitive research grants to support female social scientists during a sabbatical period. Such funding could be used for travel to and short research stays at other institutions, in Africa and abroad.

## VII. Conclusion

This analysis of gender barriers facing African women in social sciences in higher education and research has provided insight into the problems encountered by young women as students and later as university faculty and researchers. It has been shown that women continue to be under-represented as faculty members in universities and, where they are present, they are usually concentrated at the lower levels. They tend to be promoted more slowly than men and have fewer contacts than men outside their own institutions. They usually do not have mentors within their own institutions and publish less than men. Finding an appropriate balance between career and family is problematic for many female academics and some have refused opportunities to study away from home because of family responsibilities.

The situation for female students is also difficult. There is continuing disparity between male and female enrolments at universities in most (although not all) African countries. The growth of private universities has led to greater opportunities for women to find places as students (and also as senior faculty members) but most private universities are small, often very narrow in focus, and do not put emphasis on research and knowledge production.

Affirmative action policies to bring more women into public universities have had mixed results. On the one hand, they have provided opportunities for some women. On the other hand, they have sometimes backfired against women with accusations of favouritism and assumptions of female intellectual inferiority. Many universities have established sexual harassment policies but it has proved difficult to enforce such policies. Finally, female students, like female faculty, are considerably less likely to benefit from scholarships, fellowships and grants for further study.

Female researchers contribute less than 20% of the articles published in most CODESRIA, OSSREA and African Development Bank journals. Women seemed to be slightly more inclined to publish in journals based in North America while men were slightly more inclined to publish in UK-based journals. About one-quarter of the articles published by women focussed on some aspect of gender. Women were almost absent from the editor positions in CODESRIA, OSSREA and AfDB journals and they were only slightly more visible on editorial boards. They had much less than 50% participation in the governance structures of African social sciences organisations (i.e. executive councils, boards, secretariats).

Despite these difficult circumstances, several institutions are trying to improve the participation of women in social sciences research and training. Both OSSREA and AERC have taken proactive steps in recent years and organisations like FAWE and AAWORD continue to undertake gender-sensitive research and train young female researchers. Many African universities have institutes of women's studies or gender studies and, increasingly, they are offering post-graduate courses. While much remains to be done, important advances have been made.

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**APPENDIX 1: LIST OF JOURNALS THAT PUBLISHED AFRICAN SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, 2005-2010**

1. ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP	81.ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING C: GOVERNMENT AND POLICY	162.JOURNAL OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT	243.NOMADIC PEOPLES
2. ACTA ACADEMICA	82.ENVIRONMENT AND URBANIZATION	163.JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY HEALTH	244.ON-LINE INFORMATION REVIEW
3. ACTION RESEARCH	83.ESSAYS IN EDUCATION	164.JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY PRACTICE	245.OPEN LEARNING
4.ADULT EDUCATION QUARTERLY	84.ETHNOHISTORY	165.JOURNAL OF APPLIED DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY	246.PEACE REVIEW
5. AFFILIA: JOURNAL OF WOMEN AND SOCIAL WORK	85.ETHNOMUSICOLOGY	166.JOURNAL OF COMPUTER ASSISTED LEARNING	247.PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION
6. AFRICA	86.EURASIA JOURNAL OF MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION	167.JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN STUDIES	248.PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY
7. AFRICAN AFFAIRS	87.EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES	168.THE JOURNAL OF CONTINUING HIGHER EDUCATION	249.POLICE PRACTICE AND RESEARCH
8. AFRICA DEVELOPMENT	88.FEMINIST LEGAL STUDIES	169.JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY	250.POLITIKON
9.AFRICA TODAY	89.FOOD POLICY	170.JOURNAL OF CURRICULUM STUDIES	251.POPUL ENVIRON
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