Gender, Health, and Sustainable Development

Proceedings of a Workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya, 5–8 October 1993

Edited by Pandu Wijeyaratne, Lori Jones Arsenault, Janet Hatcher Roberts, and Jennifer Kitts
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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE
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"Gender and Tropical Diseases: Facing the Challenge"
Abstracts from an Essay Competition Sponsored by IDRC and TDR
In Her Lifetime: A Report on Female Morbidity and Mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa

Maureen Law and Uche Amazigo

The subject of female morbidity and mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa has received relatively little attention from researchers to date. Although much is known about the health status and causes of morbidity and mortality in infants in the first year of life, correspondingly little is known about these factors, particularly in females, in the subsequent periods of childhood and adolescence. In addition, while factors influencing the reproductive capacity of women ages 15 to 44 years have been studied extensively, little is known about the rates and causes of morbidity and mortality that are unrelated to reproductivity in this cohort. Finally, almost nothing is known about the causes of morbidity and mortality in women over 45 years of age.

This report analyzes critical biomedical issues in female morbidity in Sub-Saharan Africa, using the lifespan perspective. The application of the lifespan framework to public health is an innovative one. It is based on the assumption that there is a need to articulate the major causes and manifestations of female morbidity, not solely in women of reproductive age, but within other age groups as well. The perspective emphasizes the fact that diseases are not always episodic, but often have cumulative and synergistic effects that can adversely influence later health status and productivity of the individual, her offspring, or, indirectly, others within her care. It is anticipated that the final report will provide a solid documentary base that can be used in developing a systematic agenda to guide research and health policy formulation related to the overall health of females. Although the focus of the study is Sub-Saharan Africa, the study framework and outcomes are expected to be applicable to female morbidity and mortality in other regions of the developing world. The report will be published and available for distribution in the Spring of 1994.

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- Demography
- Sociocultural Influences on Health, Including Traditional Practices
- Nutrition
- Obstetric Morbidity and Mortality
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1Information provided from the forthcoming report of the Institute of Medicine of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences.
• Nervous System Disorders and Mental Health Problems
• Injury and Violence
• Occupational Health and Environmental Health
• Vector-borne and Other Infectious Diseases
• Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Including HIV Infection

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