



Rethinking Women Experiences in Water and Sanitation Projects in Tongogara Refugee Camp, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

In spite of the significant progress registered in positioning gender equality issues more centrally within programming, debates about the strategy of gender mainstreaming perseveres. This paper focuses on refugee women experiences in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects in Tongogara Refugee Camp (TRC) in Zimbabwe. The study posits that the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) policy in WASH projects at Tongogara Refugee Camp meant to empower women is regarded by the male counterparts as a threat to their traditional authority and power. Guided by a feminist political ecology (FPE) theoretical framework, this qualitative research utilised a case study method with sixty-eight interviews, five in-depth interviews and eight Focus Group Discussions to gather data. The findings show that the imposition of a top-down approach to the implementation of the AGDM guidelines on the refugee community has resulted in the increase of domestic violence, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), divisions in families as well as resentment of the AGDM policy by some men for promoting gender equality. The research concluded that the implementation of the AGDM policy in WASH activities is an imposition from above without the input of the refugee population, particularly the women folk.

Keywords: *Age; Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming; Feminist Political Ecology; Sexual and Gender-Based Violence; Tongogara Refugee Camp; Water Sanitation and Hygiene; Zimbabwe*

Introduction

The age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) policy is based on the premises that individuals possess unique profiles and capacities that vary according to race, migrant status, disability, indigeneity, sexual orientation and gender identity (Neil, 2015). Mhlanga, et. al (2016) posit that the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) came up with the guidelines to safeguard the rights and well-being of all persons of concern that ensure women, men, girls and boys of all ages and backgrounds benefit equitably from humanitarian interventions such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). The idea is to address discrimination and inequality and ensure equitable outcomes against injustice using procedures and practices that promote AGDM considerations (UNHCR, 2017). The policy uses a participatory rights and community-based approach, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of UNHCR's programmes (Pytlovany, et. al., 2015; UNHCR, 2017), which include WASH. The system promotes progress towards full equality, respect and equity on opportunities for people with different needs and abilities while dealing with inequality and discrimination (Grant, 2017), a phenomenon that has arguably received disproportionate attention. Despite the adoption of this policy, little is known about the status and plight of the vulnerable as gaps still exist on the implementation and monitoring of such a policy as women's participation is still an enigma.

Conducted research in refugee camps in the developing world show that women's participation in decision making is non-existent (Lutz, et. al., 2015) as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) remains the greatest protection challenge for refugee women during humanitarian emergencies (IASC, 2015; 2018). Halloway, et. al (2019) opine that SGBV leads to breakdown of social and institutional structures, and the normalisation of violence and insecurity. Approximately, one in five refugee women experience SGBV – an underestimate, given that such crimes are under-reported due to social stigma, humiliation and fear of reprisal (Simon-Butler, et. al., 2018). The United Nations (UN) reports that 2.5 billion people do not have access to proper sanitation while the sharing of public toilets with men puts women at great risk of violence and sexual assault (UNHCR, et. al., 2020).

Whereas some research has been done on the evaluation of AGDM in refugee camps, the effectiveness of mainstreaming age, gender and diversity in WASH has not yet been fully evaluated in refugee camps. Therefore, based on the case study of the Tongogara Refugee Camp (TRC), the objective of this paper is to assess how AGDM is maintained in WASH projects in TRC. The study posits that the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) policy in WASH projects at Tongogara Refugee Camp meant to empower women is regarded by the male counterparts as a threat to their traditional authority and power. Accordingly, the key question that the study addresses is: How is AGDM maintained in the implementation of WASH projects in TRC? The remaining part of this paper provides the historical background, the theoretical framework, research methodology, the results and discussion, as well as the main conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Background and Description of the Study Area

Tongogara Refugee Camp is situated in the South western part of Chipinge District in Zimbabwe. The study area falls under Natural Region V, which receives very low rainfall (300-600mm per annum), which is considered as very dry (UNHCR/WFP, 2014), making access to water very difficult. Such conditions impact negatively on women, who bear the brunt of fetching water. Today, the camp hosts over twenty two thousand refugees from Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and lately Mozambique largely because of civil wars (UNHCR, 2021). People of different social, cultural and religious backgrounds have been grouped together in the camp. The camp is managed by UNHCR, an arm of the United Nations, together with the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), which represents the host government (UNHCR/WFP, 2014). At the time of conducting the research, the camp was divided into nine residential sections. At first, refugees were settled according to their countries of origin, but with the continued influx of refugees, they are now settled as they arrive, leading to the creation of a heterogeneous community with a host of challenges associated with differences ranging from language, culture and religion, among others. There is a critical shortage of water and sanitation facilities in the TRC (Calderon-Villarreal, et. al., 2022). While the camp is dotted with pit latrines, the continued inflow of refugees results in an insufficient number of these ablution

facilities, a situation which often leads to the practice of open defecation (OD). Although the transit centre has got some public toilets, their use is being manipulated by the dominant groups.

The camp borders a game reserve, along Save River, located on the western side of the camp, where predators like lions and cheetahs prowl, making OD extremely risky. The main source of water for refugees in the TRC is ground water, extracted using 12 manually operated bush pumps, and two solar-powered whilst another two are electric-powered boreholes (Mhlanga et. al., 2016). This is where all the refugees get water for drinking, domestic use, including bathing and sanitation. Water Point User Committees (WPUC) govern these water points (WP). However, the solar panels were stolen in February 2019 and were yet to be replaced by the time of this research, in March 2020, forcing women to look for alternative water sources. By the time this research was conducted, the water allocated per person per day in the camp did not meet the stipulated Sphere minimum standards of 20 litres per person per day (Sphere, 2018). Elsewhere, a number of researchers have carried out studies in refugee settings on WASH (ISCG,2020; Sang, et. al. 2018; Oxfam, 2018; OSCE, 2020; Calderon-Villarreal, et. al., 2022; Spiegel, et. al., 2022), but little has been done to analyze the extent to which age, gender and diversity have been mainstreamed into WASH programmes in a refugee camp, which justifies our focus on TRC using a Feminist Political Ecology theoretical lens.

Theoretical Framework: Feminist Political Ecology

The theoretical framework advanced in this study is the Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) that links gender in resource access struggles to local socio-environmental changes (Sundberg, 2015). Feminist Political Ecology uses gender as a critical variable in shaping resource access and control, interacting with class, caste, race, culture, and ethnicity to shape processes of ecological change and the prospects of any community for 'sustainable development' (Guy-Antaki, et al., 2016). The approach addresses class issues of power dynamics and social stratification such as gender, race, and ethnicity (Hanson, et al.,2015a). These social differences affect power relationships and hinder efforts to address challenges in the face of resource extraction in rural areas (Buechler, et al., 2015). According to Lamb, et. al., (2017), the social and cultural expectations about what behaviour and activities are allowed, respected attributes, and rights and power one has in the family, community and nation, describes gender (Sulley, 2018). Gender mainstreaming in water interventions target women with the assertion that all women suffer equally, and can be empowered equally through 'gendered' interventions to achieve water equality (Lamb, et al., 2018). However, gender mainstreaming approaches aiming to empower women are critiqued for overlooking the multiple experiences and processes of producing inequality (Hanson, 2015b). Feminist political ecology explicitly addresses class issues of power, but the same importance be given to other forms of power dynamics and social stratification such as gender, race, and ethnicity (Hanson, et. al., 2015a).

The framework was chosen because of its inclusive analysis of social identities and exploration of power relations that disaggregates an often-homogenized water poor (Sultana, 2020). Although there are claims that women are not a homogenous group, there are apolitical explorations that control the diversity of contexts, experiences, needs, and capabilities tied to water inequality, aggravating gender and social injustices (Elmhirst, 2015). Gender has lost its political and analytical impact in the development circle (Mollet, et. al., 2013) as reflected in the way gender is rendered as a technical problem to be fixed rather than acknowledged as a source of oppression imbued in development itself (Elmhirst, 2015). However, there is an irrationality between the growing interest in women in both development studies and policy as poverty and marginalisation remain feminised (Sundberg, 2015). The power relationships that affect social differences in water hinder efforts to address challenges in the face of resource extraction in rural areas (Cole, 2019). As Clement et. al., (2019) argue, a gender fixed FPE is therefore inadequate for understanding how water inequality is maintained over time and space, since the same dynamics that drive unequal access to water in water user groups are those that also drive violence against women. Hence, the question of who controls and determines rights over resources is fundamental to an FPE

approach (Sulley, 2018), further justifying the suitability of the framework in dealing with AGDM in WASH projects at TRC.

Research Methodology

The study is based on field research undertaken in TRC between August 2019 and March 2020. A pilot study to test the interview questions was conducted in September 2018, as the researcher was still gathering information on the topic, with the final guide being approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State in July 2019. The study is based on a qualitative research design in which eight Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), 68 interviews and five key informant interviews were employed to gather data. A case study research method was utilised because of its advantages of tapping into the details of a particular area of study.

All interviews and FGDs were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of the respondents were withheld by mutual consent. For accountability and to ensure the reliability of the results, verification of the findings was done by triangulation between different types of sources that includes the key informants, participant interviewees and FGD participants. The data were coded according to gender and participation obtained from relevant literature and the FPE theoretical framework. The interviews generally lasted forty-five to ninety minutes, with the proceedings being recorded, noted and transcribed for analysis. The reading of transcripts was done several times (on average 10 times).

Along with secondary data, information was collected through sixty-eight household interviews conducted in the nine residential sections and five in-depth interviews with key informants, local NGOs (GOAL Zimbabwe and Terres des Homes), and government representatives (Camp Administrator, Engineer and the Environmental Health Technician). Of the eight FGDs conducted, seven had eight women participants representing seven major countries present in the camp (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Mozambique) whilst the eighth group was unique in that it had nine participants across the gender and selected national divides of TRC refugees. This brought the total of FGD participants to sixty-five. The study had to use purposive sampling to select households according to country of origin and to get equal representation from all sections. Snowball sampling was also used as it saved on time.

Results

Research findings are structured into two major categories meant to explore the AGDM policy in TRC. The first category focuses on challenges faced by women in WASH project implementation while the second part looks at gender and discrimination. The heterogeneity of the camp has brought together people of diverse backgrounds, thereby setting the stage for the need consider AGDM in WASH activities. Access to clean water and sanitation facilities in the camp is a challenge due to the ever increasing demand for such services, which are exacerbated by gender inequity in the distribution of resources. The research gave the impression that AGDM in the camp would bring about positive results for women refugees as well as informing the UNHCR, government planners and policy-makers in framing policies that are gender friendly.

Challenges Faced by Women in WASH Project Implementation

Research findings show that NGOs are making frantic efforts to ensure that all refugees, regardless of age, gender or ethnic origin, are equitably and meaningfully engaged and represented in management and leadership structures and processes. All WASH activities in the camp must mainstream age, gender and diversity to ensure the participation of all without leaving anyone behind especially people of concern such as women, PWD and orphaned children. The heterogeneity of the camp is perfect for the implementation of such guidelines that endeavour to have people of different backgrounds sharing common resources without discriminating on the basis of AGDM. The study also established that

participation in WASH decision-making structures is influenced by age, gender and diversity as Water Point User Committees (WPUCs) are male-dominated with no youth members and only a few women on board. Women complained about being discriminated upon on gender lines, despite their eagerness to be involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of WASH projects in the camp. It was observed that men occupy influential positions in WPUCs due to the predominant patriarchal effect in the camp where women are looked down upon. Women are stigmatised because of their gender. This created animosity among the refugee women who aspire to be treated as equals with their male counterparts, a negation of the FPE framework that encourages gender equality in project implementation. Research has revealed that patriarchy, as something considered as a western colonial social construct, used the divide and rule tactic on African marital systems where women were reduced to be household minders as the system only required men to be educated and work while women were caged in the house. It was observed that women are not allowed to attend meetings because men fear they will be conscientized of their rights, hence the imbalance in WPUC meetings and structures. The patriarchal ideologies promoted by the former colonial masters perpetrated gender inequality as evidenced by men's domination in the repair of boreholes and the construction of toilets, relegating women to the menial tasks of domestic chores, which deprive them of power in the context of AGDM policy guideline.

Furthermore, the research findings revealed that AGDM has an effect on how men and women respond to the policy guidelines, thereby causing overlapping disadvantages, discrimination and structural inequalities. Men view the policy as causing division in the family by promoting equality, while women welcomed the policy as a redeemer from male oppression and perpetual subordination. It was observed that even the implementing NGOs tend to be insensitive to gender issues as one woman from the FGD with the Mozambiquans retorts:

Once we air our views with the male dominated NGO staff, we expect them to be impartial. Alas, to one's dismay, they will always rule in favour of men. We are treated as second class citizens to men who are given preference in WASH programmes. There are no women builders or pump minders in the camp. We only cook for the male builders and provide water for the construction of toilets.

[Interview Participant]

Women face neglect and are being forced to play second fiddle to their male counterparts who seem to be at the helm of WASH activities in the camp due to their physique. This has relegated them to the menial tasks of providing water and other domestic resources to the builders in the home. Women are good for nothing and their only role is in the home.

Observations show that the oppressive gender roles where women are subjected to household chores in the home, have led them to resist participating in WPUC meetings or taking up positions to meet their quota of four members in the committee. Such socially prescribed gender roles limited women's ability to participate on an equal footing with their male counterparts. The positions of WPUC chairperson and vice chairperson, secretary and treasurer were left to men, while women were relegated to be caretakers and committee members. This has created a leadership crisis in the camp as women are conspicuous by their absence in WASH leadership structures, opting to be domestic water managers as well as promoters of household sanitation activities.

From the participant interviewees, it was revealed that lack of proper consultation by the NGOs on the implementation of the AGDM guidelines has left out women as they were not allowed to attend such meetings by their husbands. Even the people of concern like the disabled were also not consulted on their preferred toilet designs as cultural and religious beliefs were not considered.

The research findings showed that to meet the AGDM requirements, women and men have to perform the same tasks such as excavating toilet pits, repairing boreholes, construction of toilets and

maintenance of the pipe line. The majority of women interview participants felt that giving women the management role in WASH projects was the only way to ensure an equitable distribution of resources as they are the ones who bore the brunt of lack of such resources. This position is further reiterated by a participant who stated her sentiments as follows:

The intermittent power supply has worsened the water situation in the camp. It is women who bear the burden of water shortage through joining the long queues. As women, we are responsible for the provision of water in the home as well as the general up-keep of the family. Not consulting us in the implementation of the AGDM guidelines is a recipe for failure since we are the dominant group in the camp.

[Interview Participant]

Women are at the centre of WASH implementation in the camp but they suffer discrimination. The consultation meetings on the AGDM guidelines in the camp were not all inclusive as some people of concern were left out of such meetings. Consultation meetings were essential in the success of the implementation of the policy as the views of the refugee community will be considered in the policy formulation. It was observed that the meetings were meant to appraise the refugees on what the UNHCR want to be done in the camp in the area of WASH to enable the adoption of the AGDM guidelines.

Although the AGDM guidelines advocate equality in the implementation of WASH activities in the camp, women are still at the periphery of decision-making. It was gathered that women are also advocating for an inclusive WASH policy that will see men performing the same household chores as women as postulated by the AGDM policy guidelines. Women are clamoring for equality because they are experiencing harassment and assaults in the home. This is confirmed through the FPE where gender is rendered as a technical problem to be fixed rather than merely acknowledged as a source of oppression imbued in development itself (Elmhirst, 2015). We now turn to the section on gender and discrimination.

Gender and Discrimination

Research findings from the FGDs show that although the AGDM guidelines aim at gender equality by ensuring that all refugees have access to WASH facilities irrespective of racial, religious, cultural and ethnic grounds, women were still discriminated because of their gender. Men were not prepared to share power with women as postulated by the guidelines hence the rampant unequal distribution of resources in the camp. Men dominate the WASH resource distribution exercise in the camp. Some women complained about the administration and physical layout of the camp as discriminating against them. It was observed that women were discriminated on gender lines as they were not strong enough to undertake hard labour such as digging of toilet pits and the repair and maintenance of boreholes. The selection and training of pump minders was viewed as a men's domain. It was gathered from the key informants that women willing to take up such challenging positions are threatening the status quo. This situation forced women to be under psychological abuse that included their exclusion from relevant meetings in the guise of patriarchy. Some respondents blamed it on women themselves for they look down upon each other in meetings. They scorn those who aspire to take on challenging roles. As one woman from DRC retorted:

Women are their own enemies. Women's encroachment on a previously male domain has brought about domestic violence as men feel threatened. It is women who are at the centre of controversy as they look with disdain those women who are willing to take up challenging roles in WPUCs. To them, it is taboo for women to take on male roles of chairing meetings as well as the construction of toilets.

[Interview Participant]

Women remain vulnerable marginalised to take on challenging positions in the WPUCs as they fear being assaulted by men. The fact that women are not united to support one another during elections, has led to their demise and remain under male domination.

The study also gathered that women suffer discrimination in the planning and construction of WASH facilities as some structures are not gender friendly to cater for menstruating women. The toilets do not have locks or the menstrual hygiene management kit. Women fear using the facilities since they might be raped or assaulted by men when accessing them. This resonates with the FPE framework that view the marginalisation of women in development as being feminised. Thus, patriarchy and the obstructive gender norms that gave women no option but to concentrate on household chores to fulfil parenting obligations, leaving men to dominate decision making processes, is also to blame. Such predispositions have led women to develop negative feelings on the policy and refuse to take up unpaid leadership roles since this would take their time for other social and economic activities.

The research findings reveal that the implementation of AGDM policy guidelines do not promote the plight of PWDs as they are facing stigma and discrimination resulting in greater vulnerability to violence and abuse and limited access to services. They suffer rejection by family members as they cannot take them out to defecate at night due to fear of attacks. It was observed that the absence of “disability-friendly” ablution facilities at TRC has exacerbated their predicament. The PWD have to compete with the able-bodied to access the existing inadequate facilities unsuitable for the paraplegic people. In addition, findings also show that the handicapped, like the albino, are not prioritized during the distribution of WASH resources, making them feel neglected. They considered themselves inferior to able-bodied women, forcing them to avoid the public and fetch water in the night.

This study found out that it is taboo for men to share household chores as fetching water, caring for the sick and cleaning the toilet with women in the home. Although giving equal opportunities to women and men in the camp would bring about proper project implementation, it was observed that the needs of women were not considered. Women were discriminated upon in resource distribution positions as this is dominated by men. It was gathered that with the nature of refugee life, it is proving unsustainable to let them build permanent structures as they are ever on the move, changing camps. This was elaborated by the camp Administrator who gave insight on the nomadic nature of most refugees seeking an opportunity to go to *bulaya* (overseas). In his words, the Camp Administrator remarked:

Refugees are ever on the move, changing camps in search of asylum. The talk of equality, where no one is left behind, especially the people of concern, means the disabled had to compete with the able-bodied for opportunities in the camp. The AGDM policy is ignoring the plight of people of concern in the guise of equality. However, the policy sounds impressive on paper, but on the ground there is inequality in most WASH projects as they are male-dominated.

[Interview Participant]

Research findings show that women complain of mistreatment by those in authority despite the AGDM policy guidelines advocating the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Women fear harassment and rape by men in public toilets and open defecation sites. They mentioned that most cases of gender based violence (GBV) occur when they go out to fetch water, bathe, and wash clothes. Issues of GBV in the home are on the increase as men exercise what they regarded as their traditional rights, while women, though passive, are resisting by not attending consultative meetings being addressed by GOAL officials. It was observed that women are concerned with their privacy when it comes to issues related to sanitation needs than men, since men can urinate subtly in open spaces outside latrines. Cultural norms and physiological differences have also led women to be more dependent on using latrine facilities than men. Moreover, men resist change and are not willing to embrace equality with women, hence the use of physical violence to stamp authority. According men and women equal opportunities in the home will erase the existing oppressive social fabric while promoting gender equality. It was observed that

GBV is being perpetrated willy-nilly among the refugee women in TRC. Participants mentioned cultural norms, discrimination and abuse of power, as the major causes. Research findings also show that the system of giving only one ration card per family in the name of the male household head perpetuated women's dependence on men while strengthening men's control over women. Such operational settings provide the basis for physical violence. Women were emotive as they blame the law enforcement agents who seem to be lenient on men, as will be discussed in the ensuing section.

Discussion on the Implementation of Agdm Policy

This section will discuss the implementation of the AGDM policy in the context of the overall findings in relation to the FPE theoretical framework on gender equality in access to water and sanitation. The study findings provide a rich vein of expression on the complexity of the gender and equality processes and the underlying implications to women.

Although the policy emphasizes equality, the needs of PWD were not taken seriously as they remained marginalised. They are made to compete with the abled-bodied in accessing WASH facilities. This is evidenced by the absence of disability-friendly toilets in the camp that are meant to cater for those in such situations. They are deprived of the right to access such facilities which are an essential part of their lives. They are being discriminated upon and exposed to unfair treatment. On paper, the PWD are well catered for, but in reality they are a forgotten lot as they are left out of WASH planning and design meetings. This implies that the AGDM concept suffered implementation and monitoring challenges as GOAL Zimbabwe did not do enough project monitoring to ensure that all refugees have equal opportunities in the camp as postulated by the AGDM guideline. Much as the policy guidelines advocate for equality without leaving anyone behind. Evidence from the ground show that the NGOs want to treat everyone equally without taking cognizance of the diversity of culture and religion prevalent in the camp that does not call for homogeneity. This reverberates with the FPE theoretical framework where it is essential to respect the social and cultural expectations of the community if ever there is to be behaviour change in the family, community and nation (Lamb, et. al., 2017). Taking a straight jacket approach to the implementation of the guidelines is a recipe for failure as there is need to apply a context specific method that will provide solution to the issue at hand. Flexibility on the part of those implementing the guidelines not a one size fits all approach, was viewed to be the best option as refugees will be treated on a case-by-case basis without discrimination on age, gender and diversity especially people of concern. The inclusivity of social identities and exploration of power relations that disaggregates an often-homogenized 'water poor' as postulated by Sultana (2020), will ensure programme success. Thus, the inclusive approach must be treated with caution as it is not always the case that refugees have the same needs and desires.

Simply imposing the guidelines on the refugee community to embrace with the hope of ushering change in their lives, sounds inequalitarian. The notable short coming was the failure to conduct a baseline survey to assess the needs of the refugee community as they expressed ignorance on the existence of such a policy guideline. A participatory approach to the programme implementation would ensure inclusivity and ownership since everyone would be given the opportunity to air their views on their preferred WASH facility. Thus, a bottom-up approach, which is egalitarian, will ensure community participation in programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to enhance sustainability. This resonates well with prevailing literature on rural development which has seen community participation as an essential driving force for programme sustainability based on the assumption that working with communities can help make interventions more relevant to local priorities (Madon, et. al., 2018). However, the policy suffered an implementation and monitoring crisis in the camp, as gaps were experienced in WASH projects, yet it remains the only solution to the refugee plight. Their involvement in all the processes would have brought about ownership. Evidence from the camp is such that the NGOs dictate to the refugees what is supposed to be done in WASH and the budget at hand for that year without

their involvement. Even these NGOs are not involved in the planning process as it is done overseas by UNHCR and enforced on the refugee community. They were not involved in project design but they are expected to implement something they did not plan, a phenomenon that runs contrary to the practitioners of FPE who advocate participation for all without discrimination. Although mainstreaming is a cross-cutting theme integral to all stages of the design, monitoring and evaluation of all programmes and projects (GWF, 2014), the community view it as an imposition. This is the reason why the policy is failing to get the full support of all the refugee community since it did not originate from them.

Consultative meetings on the introduction of the ADGM policy meant to promote the refugee community rights, were not all inclusive as women were not allowed by their husbands to attend meetings. This is a worrisome development as men fear women would be conscientized on their rights, leading to misunderstandings in the home. The absence of women in such crucial meetings due to the existing social difference in power relationships in the home is being perpetrated by patriarchy. Women are mostly affected as they are not aware of the existence of the AGDM guidelines. This leaves the refugee community in a quandary as they struggle to imagine what exactly is supposed to be done to ensure that nobody is not left out of the programme while ensuring that people of concern participate. Forcing women to attend meetings does not change anything if it has no buy-in from their husbands. Moreover, without their husbands sanctioning their participation, their attendance in meetings is not guaranteed. Essentially, this is considered a perpetuation of the patriarchal predispositions prevalent in most African families that discriminate against women preventing them from making simple decisions, even at household level. This resonates with existing literature where decision-making in most households is monopolized by the household head (Folbre, 2021). There is need for behaviour change by men, which cannot be attained over-night. The refugee community interpret the AGDM policy as a top-down approach imposed on them for implementation without their input. The resultant scenario is that, women and girls continue with their daily chores and never bothered attending such meetings.

The AGDM guidelines advocate gender equality in decision making without discriminating people of concern. However, inclusivity without discriminating anyone on class, caste, race, culture, and ethnicity as embedded in the FPE framework (Elmhirst, 2015), is the missing link. Furthermore, women's voices are not taken seriously during meetings thereby creating a gap in the effectiveness of consultation meetings as platforms for change. Women are passive participants in WPUCs to rubber stamp the donor requirement of fifty percent women and fifty percent men, but the positions being occupied are not that significant and influential. This was succinctly put by Tahir, (2022), who purports that the egalitarian gender regimes as a result of migration has brought positive changes in all determinants of the gender ideology of migrants, serve for the domestic chores and caregiving responsibilities. Women are still inclined to the menial roles, while men take on challenging tasks as well as decision making roles in the household. Thus, lack of political will on the part of men, to relinquish power into the hands of women in the guise of equality, is a missing cog in the AGDM engine essential to expedite the integration of the policy guidelines into communities. Hence, the policy's practice of gender mainstreaming which serves to incorporate women into larger development projects without distinction, is thus antithetical to the FPE framework, which claims that women are not a homogenous group but their aspirations are controlled by the diversity of contexts, experiences, needs, and capabilities tied to water inequality, aggravating gender and social injustices (Elmhirst, 2015).

In as much as the refugee community believe in gender equality and acknowledge the existence of power dynamics that shape the community, the AGDM policy guidelines tend to favour men. Despite the guidelines' emphasis on equal participation by all without leaving anyone behind in all projects, active and meaningful participation will not happen automatically but needs deliberate efforts that enable women to influence decision-making processes as well. As asserted by Halloway (2019), communities are characterized by entrenched hierarchies and inequalities, where caution is needed to address and alleviate these patterns of inequalities. Although, the NGO and camp authorities encourage women participation, women are lethargic, hence their minimal participation in WPUC/NFI distributions, leading to male

domination. Failure by the policy to deal with urgent matters of SGBV had rendered it toothless and mere rhetoric. Ensuring women are well protected from SGBV is an essential element of the policy but without proper follow up, its success remains shrouded in doubt.

Women are not allowed to occupy positions of authority by their husbands where they will lead men. It is taboo for women to carry out tasks that are traditionally meant for men, a theory that opposes the FPE agenda of empowering women. Such patriarchal tendencies, prevalent in most refugee community, defeats the whole concept of equality since women are still discriminated on gender lines. However, it is not an African system to discriminate on sexuality but Western social ideological system as the African education system was all inclusive and accommodative. During story telling there was never a time when girls were chased away from listening and learning from our education system of folktales. This echoes Perrin, et. al., (2019) view that the socially ascribed gender norms often perpetuate a dual and exclusionary view of gender where female and male compete for dominance. Such polemics lead to discrimination and marginalisation which results in compromised access to resources, power, influence in decision making, and increased domination of women by men. Gaps on equality and the protection of women from male domination were noticed in the camp, leaving them vulnerable. The policy is viewed to be piecemeal and gives women little voice to freedom, as there is no positive behaviour change by men to end violence against women in TRC.

Prevention of discrimination and marginalization requires changes in gender relations and power dynamics within the family and community. Such roles have subjected women to live under further male bondage for too long. Given the taboos around defecation, menstruation and lack of privacy, women and girls prefer to go to the toilet under the cover of darkness, thereby ending up being sexually abused (Sommer, et. al., 2014). Despite the hype on the promotion of gender equality in the camp by the AGDM guidelines, close monitoring to ensure it won't degenerate into SGBV is essential, since its roots are not in the community.

The continued reliance on the AGDM policy will have little effect on behavior change in men as they remain pervasive and continue abusing women. This is because the policy guideline lacks clear monitoring procedures thereby rendering it weak and unsuitable for addressing the forms of abuses faced by women. Calls to elevate women to leadership positions seem to have suffered resistance. However, simply 'adding' women to a process does not address questions of power. The traditional power imbalances and unequal power relations between women and men remains a crucial social mechanism by which women are forced into a subordinate position. Sharing of WASH roles in the home with men as decision makers and women as primary caregivers remains a stumbling block (Cole, 2019), as postulated by FPE proponents. Such challenging societal norms are vehemently opposed by men as they feel their hold on power being undermined. Thus, the AGDM has deteriorated instead of refining the conditions of women in TRC, in the guise of promoting gender equality.

The absence of women in key activities such as pump mechanic and builders, traditionally male domains, has exposed the local NGO's failure to promote gender equality. Understanding gender strategies and mainstreaming remain nipped in the bud. If gender mainstreaming is to ensure that no one is left behind, there is need to appreciate and justify other factors that lead to exclusion and marginalisation, such as age, disability, ethnicity, and sexuality and how they execute inequality (Tagutanazvo, et. al., 2017). From a FPE perspective, the AGDM approach is appropriate for equality on women and men as it advocate for the participation of all irrespective of their gender. However, the task of fetching water and the upkeep of the home remains the responsibility of women. Even in sickness they are forced to fetch water when it is needed, thereby defeating the concept of equal sharing of responsibilities. From the outside, the policy seems to usher in a window of hope for women from male bondage but it's implementation on the ground has left women worse off than before. It has sown seeds of dependency and disagreement in most households. This is blamed on WASH policies and programmes

that do not prioritise safety and privacy for women thereby undermining the importance of the AGDM to WASH.

Although gender inclusive strategies within the WASH sector have been established across the world (Sulley, 2018), evidence from TRC shows a gap between these policies and practice. Their implementation has been viewed to be non-participatory, hence fails to portray the gender inclusive power dynamics occurring within a WASH context. Achieving gender equality requires bold and sustainable actions that address the structural obstacles and root causes of discrimination against women as postulated by the FPE theorists. On paper, the inclusion of all people of concern without leaving anyone behind in project implementation will bring about success and sustainability of WASH initiatives. However, most WASH projects are superficially committed to gender mainstreaming, but fail to turn gender-related knowledge into practice. Such stigma is retrogressive and exposes GOAL's inability to deal with issues of discrimination. The approach supports the goals of gender equality and the enjoyment of rights by all, but evidence on the ground points otherwise. The failure to enlist the contributions of the refugees themselves in policy formulation has rendered the implementation of the AGDM guidelines a non-event in TRC.

The AGDM policy focuses mainly on how to promote the desires of UNHCR as an organization at the expense of the refugee community. Putting the needs of the refugees first will lead to the adoption of the bottom-up approach which the UNHCR has failed to uphold in TRC as the refugee community were not consulted during the formulation of the AGDM policy. A bottom-up process will ensure ownership by the refugees while promoting sound relations at community and household level. The next section focuses on the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper has provided an outline on the extent to which the AGDM is maintained in WASH projects in TRC through an elaboration of how discrimination and gender inequality are rife among community in the camp. Therefore, the use of the FPE framework to deconstruct these factors contributes to our understanding of the differences in perceptions between the female and male refugees on the implementation of such a policy. Hence, the research reached the philosophical conclusion that the AGDM policy guideline is an imposition from above without the input of the refugee population, particularly women, whose participation is mere window dressing. Arguably, as supported by the findings of this study, the involvement of women is not significant as evidenced by the positions they hold in the WPUCs in the camp.

The patriarchal system that is engrained in the African men is hard to erase over-night, so is equality on the performance of household chores by women and men achieved over-night. It takes time and some bit of education for men to do away with the patriarchal system. Hence, it is against this backdrop that the paper gives the following recommendations:

- There is need for safe havens for victims of SGBV in the camp where they are offered psychosocial support, legal advice and clinical supervision.
- Cultural differences and issues of disability must be considered in construction of toilets.
- There is need for the promotion of women leadership and equal representation without discrimination on gender.
- There is need for trainings on gender awareness and analysis to fight gender inequalities.

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