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# Gender, HIV/AIDS, and Human Security in Africa

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## Résumé

*Utilisant l'analyse théorique et les résultats empiriques d'études de cas dans plusieurs pays africains, les auteurs de ce numéro spécial adoptent une analyse féministe des relations entre les sexes, du VIH/sida et de la sécurité humaine afin d'élargir et d'approfondir notre compréhension de la santé, du développement et de la sécurité, et de leurs effets sur les individus et la société. L'effet déstabilisateur du VIH/sida sur les pays et les collectivités a des répercussions sur le niveau de la violence sexuelle et sexiste, la pauvreté, les questions de santé, l'insécurité alimentaire et autres grands défis sociaux, politiques et économiques. Les auteurs ayant contribué à ce recueil non seulement nous mettent au défi de penser de façon plus critique et novatrice sur l'impact du VIH/sida en ce qui a trait à l'inégalité entre les sexes et l'insécurité humaine à travers l'Afrique, mais nous fournissent aussi de nouvelles perspectives pour repenser les efforts politiques et programmatiques aptes à résoudre la crise.*

## Abstract

*Using theoretical analysis and empirical findings from case studies in several African countries, the authors of this special issue adopt a feminist analysis of gender relations, HIV/AIDS, and human security in order to expand upon and deepen our understanding of health, development, and security, and how they affect individuals and society. HIV/AIDS can have a destabilizing effect on countries and communities, with consequences for levels of sexual and gender-based violence, poverty, health issues, food insecurity, and broader social, political, and economic challenges. The authors who have contributed to this collection of articles not only challenge us to think more critically and innovatively about the impact of HIV/AIDS as it pertains to gender inequality and human insecurity across Africa, but also they offer fresh insights for rethinking policy and programmatic efforts to address the crisis.*

Throughout Africa, HIV/AIDS and gender inequality continue to pose challenges for the promotion of human security and the well-being of people and societies. While many academic and policy studies have underscored the ways in which HIV/AIDS challenges the human security needs of women in particular, few studies have documented the gendered character of HIV/AIDS and human security. Furthermore, studies promoting an improved understanding of the relationship between gender inequality and the spread or mitigation of HIV/AIDS have seldom examined these gendered analyses of HIV/AIDS in the context of human security.

The conceptual framework of human security is an important tool for the analysis of gender inequality and HIV/AIDS in Africa because it underscores not only the human or individual experience of insecurity and instability, but also the collective impact of HIV/AIDS on social and structural vulnerability and insecurity. The widespread nature of HIV/AIDS and the way it crosses class, racial, ethnic, and other social groupings challenges Africa's capacity to ensure food security, political and economic stability as well as personal safety. There is also an important gender dynamic to the destabilizing impact of HIV/AIDS, which surfaces in sexual and gender-based violence experienced by women in times of war and in post-conflict situations, in periods of changing expectations and responsibilities for women carers living with HIV/AIDS patients, and in times of changing gender norms and institutional practices, particularly in the gendered discourses surrounding HIV/AIDS transmission, prevention, mitigation and treatment.

A feminist analysis of gender relations, HIV/AIDS and human security expands and deepens our understanding of the nature and impact of the disease on individuals, families and societies. The special issue is a theoretical and empirical contribution to this analysis, underscoring the important inter-relationship between gender, HIV/AIDS and human security and the need to consider these three concepts as overlapping and interconnected issues affecting development in Africa. The contributions to this special issue weave these ideas together to offer a more complicated picture of human security and insecurity in Africa as a result of the spread of HIV/AIDS. The articles offer a clearer understanding of how human (in)security is connected to the perpetuation of gender norms and inequitable gender relations. The authors bring together

rich analyses with grounded empirical research from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and sites across Africa.

Several key themes emerge from the findings presented in this collection. First, HIV/AIDS and human security are gendered experiences. Moreover, these gendered experiences are both embodied in the individual and manifested in societal practices. Finally, HIV/AIDS has a destabilizing effect that is both gendered and intensifies human insecurity for individuals, families, and societies. Building on the pioneering work of Colleen O'Manique (2006), the contributions in this special issue demonstrate how gender relations, and the gendered distribution of power, condition human security and exacerbate the challenges posed by the spread and mitigation of HIV/AIDS. Evidence of the gendered distribution of power can be found in the laws, policies, practices and ideologies in any given society. The articles in this collection build on this critique by examining how the gendered distribution of power relates to HIV/AIDS and human security in Africa in particular cases.

Early attempts to link HIV/AIDS, human security and gender can be found in the works of Ulf Kristofferson (2000) and Elhadj Sy (2001). Kristofferson's work examines the factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS in emergency situations and how they subsequently affected gender relations. He pays attention to sexual violence as a weapon of war, the breakdown of social structures and legal protection, lack of health infrastructure, inadequate economic opportunities and the lack of basic needs, insufficient education and training opportunities for women and the high risk transmission potential experienced by soldiers working in emergency situations.

Sy's work on gender, HIV/AIDS and human security focuses on those deemed most highly vulnerable to HIV infection as well as those facing the greatest challenges to coping with the impact of HIV. Both Sy and Kristofferson make the links between gender, HIV/AIDS and human security. However, neither fully tackled the gender relations and societal gender norms that perpetuate HIV/AIDS and human insecurity or the gendered identities that embody individuals and characterize societies thereby contributing to the HIV/AIDS crisis and human insecurity.

More recent research bringing together gender, HIV/AIDS and

human security builds on the feminist critiques of the traditional "international relations" security lens. Gender identity is integral to perspectives on security and focuses on the way in which security is understood by individuals in their day-to-day lives (Hoogensen and Vigeland Rottem 2004). In essence, a human security approach to analyzing gender and HIV/AIDS facilitates a bottom-up approach to security research (Hoogensen and Stuvøy, 2006). Building on Ann Tickner's work (2001), an understanding of human security emerged from the feminist critique of the realist tradition of security studies, which replaced the state with the individual as the centre of conceptions of human security. HIV/AIDS, as a human security issue, is a personal and human concern that affects the daily lives of women and men in their homes and their communities, where personal and human security is most often compromised. The contributions in this special issue, however, take this analysis one step further to reveal the ways gendered identities and conceptualizations of masculinities and femininities manifest themselves in day-to-day practices, further destabilizing societies, entrenching inequalities and contributing to human insecurity.

The authors in this collection begin from the starting point that the link between gender, HIV/AIDS and human security has largely been ignored in the burgeoning HIV/AIDS literature. Their contributions reflect this special issue's argument that the three themes in fact form an essential core interrelationship that needs to be understood both theoretically and at the level of praxis. The collection brings together authors who are concerned with untangling some of the contested theoretical positions on health, gender and human security in ways that provide new thinking about all three, particularly in regard to the spaces where violence, conflict, agency and power interact in contested, changing and gendered ways. In doing so, the authors highlight the need for thinking theoretically with grounded analyses of the day-to-day lives of people and societies coping with the impacts of HIV/AIDS, gender inequality and human insecurity. We hope these articles will stimulate analysis and debate in our understanding of HIV/AIDS, gender relations and human security in Africa.

In August 2007, scholars and practitioners from across Canada and Africa came together in Halifax to discuss the intersections of

gender, human security and HIV/AIDS in feminist thinking and development practice. The outcome of this workshop was a renewed desire to make sense of the human security / insecurity dimensions of gender and AIDS, as witnessed in daily practices and in the programs and approaches designed to address gender inequality and HIV/AIDS. Several scholarly papers emerged from this workshop and are presented in this special issue, along with a number of additional papers on the subject.

The articles in this collection deal with a range of topics that address the nexus of gender, HIV/AIDS and human security in ways that challenge us to think about the spaces where violence (both overt and covert) surrounding HIV/AIDS (in terms of infection and care giving) takes place. These articles deal with the embodiment — and experience of AIDS — and also the ways in which different organizations have attempted to address or have exacerbated the three themes. The articles underscore the point that gender and HIV/AIDS is a human security concern that requires attention — and responses — to the everyday experiences of men and women as well as to the ways in which expectation around masculinities and femininities have affected societies caught up in the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The first article by Colleen O'Manique and Sandra MacLean serves as an important introduction to the key themes and scholarly debates raised by this special issue. As such, it draws out the different ways in which HIV/AIDS has been securitized and asks whose security is in question in the mainstream literature on HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. O'Manique and MacLean provide an essential foundation for the subsequent articles by highlighting the trends and debates in the security / human security literature, particularly the important feminist critiques of HIV/AIDS and human security. The authors challenge us to find new ways of understanding human security and gender as they relate to HIV/AIDS in Africa.

The article by Lahoma Thomas and Rebecca Tiessen explores HIV/AIDS, sexuality, and gender-based violence in war-affected and post-conflict communities. They examine the link between gender inequality and human security in conflict situations. The experiences of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in war transfers into post-conflict situations and brings the violence even

more clearly to the personal and human security level. Evidence from Uganda suggests that masculinist privilege prevails, and women remain vulnerable to SGBV post-conflict — not just from soldiers, but from the broader community — thereby entrenching a violent masculinist culture.

The security issues are further complicated by the practice of caring for those who are HIV positive. In their article on gender relations and home-based caring in Zimbabwe, Miriam Grant and Jane Parpart examine the ways in which violence and insecurity are central to multiple spaces, including the home. Examples of violence against wives and daughters who are caring (sometimes reluctantly) for abusive or neglectful HIV positive husbands and fathers reveal the extent to which claims on women's time, effort and resources continue to be exerted in a gender framework. At the same time, Grant and Parpart discover that gendered practices have been modified under the pressure of caring, leading young men to take on non-traditional gender roles and some women carers to gain a sense of empowerment from their work, particularly in the context of community-based support groups.

In the article by Rosemary Jolly and Alan Jeeves, the authors examine human insecurity arising from changes in the South African Constitution which are having the reverse of their intended effect on local people as individual rights and well-being is put before the well-being of the community. Jolly and Jeeves uncover how community members, particularly women, struggle with changing and deteriorating community relations in the midst of growing poverty, epidemic HIV and widespread violence. Susan Thomson makes a similar claim in her article drawing on examples from Rwanda. She argues that national policies and programs do not necessarily translate into meaningful change at the individual level. Research with a broad range of stakeholders in Rwanda underscores the ways in which national policies can contribute to insecurity and vulnerability when individuals are incapable of acting on their rights as a result of gendered power dynamics with local officials and within the household.

Shelley Jones' article examines the gap between policies (such as the Presidential Emergency Program for AIDS Reduction [PEPFAR]) and local practices (poverty-induced sexual transactions, sexual abuse and exploitation, and lack of access to sexual

health resources). She explores the vulnerability to HIV/AIDS of twelve young women in rural Uganda as well as recent trends in HIV/AIDS policy and programming at both the national and global levels. In his article, Roberts Muriisa analyzes the role of NGOs in strengthening social relations at the community level and between individuals. He concludes that NGOs build social capital, which has been particularly important in addressing stigma, social exclusion and discrimination for those living with HIV/AIDS. The creation of HIV/AIDS awareness programs and the strengthening of social relations within families and communities have led to improved care and support, especially for people infected with HIV/AIDS or those orphaned or widowed by AIDS. Muriisa's analysis advances our understanding of the role of civil society in promoting new opportunities for those living with HIV/AIDS.

Yet, challenges remain and this is evident in Sarah Pugh's review essay on the impact of religion on gender relations, HIV/AIDS and human security. While recognizing the many positive roles that faith-based organizations can play within their communities in terms of HIV/AIDS education, prevention, treatment, care and support, this article primarily focuses on how the sexist teachings and practice of some Christian-based religions in sub-Saharan Africa are contributing to both the general spread of HIV/AIDS and to human insecurity. Pugh's article examines the ways some religion-based messages can reinforce gendered stereotypes, impact condom accessibility and usage, circumscribe the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS education programs, and contribute to a climate of stigma and discrimination, especially against women living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. In so doing, Pugh's analysis sheds light on how religious interpretations and practices can further compromise human security for Africans in the region.

All of the articles in this collection offer new ways of thinking about the inter-relationship between gender, HIV/AIDS and human security in Africa. Their analyses challenge us to think more critically about the social impact of HIV/AIDS and the programs that are delivered across Africa. By linking gender, HIV/AIDS and human security, we demonstrate the ways in which HIV/AIDS and human security are gendered experiences. These experiences are exemplified in the day-to-day lives of men and women living with or coping with the human insecurity posed by

HIV/AIDS. They are further understood in relation to the societal norms around masculinities and femininities that shape gender inequality, exacerbate the spread of HIV/AIDS, and augment the challenges of coping with the crisis of HIV/AIDS on a daily basis in care-giving and development programming. The embodied and gendered experiences of HIV/AIDS can thus be understood at both the individual and societal levels. The insights provided in this collection demonstrate the destabilizing effect HIV/AIDS has on individuals, families and societies, their gendered character and their integration into power relations which both reflect and exacerbate human insecurity in the region.

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