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I have a confession to make; it became a bit difficult for me to review this book. Why? As you can imagine, I became emotionally involved in the issues that were being presented by the different authors. Gender issues never fail to do that to me. I shed a tear or two as I went through and shared a journey of seventeen writers from Bless to Schlyter as they narrated and then analyzed the living conditions of orphans and vulnerable children and ultimately the despair of the elderly. I became moved as I was reading about desperate measures resorted to by the elderly populations in our cities and peri-urban areas, especially the old women coping with everyday challenges of food insecurity and caring for their dying children and grand children. A particular story that disturbed me was one told by Nyanguru of an elderly lady (Nkhono 'Maseeiso) who had to sell her three-roomed house and surrounding land in order to meet the expenses of her daughter's funeral. Surely, no member of society should be forced to resort to such desperate measures. Where are the media practitioners to highlight the plight of 'Me 'Maseeiso and others?

First, about the Gender, Research on Urbanization, Planning, Housing and Everyday Life GRUPHEL project; this project has immensely contributed to literature and reference material for researchers like me and my colleagues at WLSA as we struggle to organize empirical data on issues affecting women and the law in the region. GRUPHEL has provided a platform as well as a critical mass for production and generation of authentic empirical evidence and credibility to issue that gender activists and development practitioners in the sub-region are struggling to make visible. With this growing body of knowledge, Southern Africa is half-way towards addressing systematic barriers that surround the economic, social and legal situation of women and a step towards formulation of policies and laws

that substantively address the concerns of our populations. I want to take this opportunity to salute past and present researchers of GRUPHEL 1, 2, and 3 who over the past twelve years researched, compiled, analyzed and narrated stories of women and men as they negotiate urban living and the struggles of everyday life. I also want to commend ISAS and the NUL for housing and coordinating such a valuable project that has surpassed itself in giving a meaning and indeed a new way of looking at urbanization. You have managed to look at urbanization with a gendered lens.

GRUPHEL has given us an opportunity through a book like this to turn our attention to the plight of women, not only in the rural areas where majority of our population live, but to the urban areas as well. Most countries in Southern African such as Zambia are getting more urbanized. As I was reading the different studies I realized that very soon we will not keep up with the rate at which our countries are getting urban. Therefore, before we know it, Southern Africa will be one big urban area. In the event of that happening, we need to be well prepared with well researched testimonies to argue for policy, legal and attitudinal changes to protect and advocates for housing and related services for poor women, men, boys and girls who are inhabitants of these cities.

I have organized my review of this book along three lines, first, I focused attention on the methodologies used for undertaking the studies, second, on the extent to which merging gender issues in the urban areas around gender, housing and generations were captured and lastly on what future topics might be taken up by other researchers to generate more knowledge and enrich the debates that have been started in GRUPHEL as well as more pointers for policy formulation and legal reforms.

On methodologies, my impression is that where researchers compromised in terms of size of their research populations (I realized that there must have been a consensus to keep the studies manageable in terms of size) they more than made up in their use of secondary data and the choice of qualitative study design. A slight discomfort is that some of their samples are way too small yet they are raising critical and controversial issues which must be supported by bigger denominations.

Granted, the authors have made a deliberate undertaking to emphasize on quality rather than quantity. In this scenario there has to be a balance of a much bigger sample population in order to facilitate scientific generalization and replication. On the other hand, authors have managed to our effort to capture the voices of the researched, that was beautiful and resourceful, it has added the human dimension and grounded the issues that could have otherwise become purely academic. Although undertaken in different countries, in different contexts and exploring different issues, all the thirteen studies share a number of things in common; they have clearly and articulately defined their parameters of analysis, and provided a definition and understanding of gender which is time and culture specific. All the studies have interrogated, though to a differing degree, the different and unequal social roles and relations between men and women and across generations. I was impressed with how gender has been contextualized to location, culture and socio-economic environment.

On the scope of the research, this book contains a whooping 287 pages of well argued not and well presented issues pertaining to gender, urban and every day living. It covers social, cultural and economic dimensions and manages to bring to the surface (for all of us to see) the power relations that characterize urban life in Southern Africa between boys and girls, men and women of different generations. It discusses human relations on issues ranging from land management, employment, unemployment, inheritance, care work and struggle for political and decision-making space in the households. Discussions in the book bring a refreshing perspective to the cultural aspect of space and sharing of premises between different generations of family members.

The studies (which are a subject matter of this book) undertaken under GRUPHEL cover emerging and disturbing issues facing Southern Africa region. These are issues of child headed households, the missing generation (as a result of HIV/AIDS) and emerging stark realities of shifting roles especially among children, women and the elderly populations. Scholars like Munalula, Mohale and Kimane present the legal and human protection as well as people's perception towards responsibilities and obligation to provision of shelter and

maintenance. There is an interesting debate by Munalula on legal versus moral duty to maintenance and economic support to the elderly. The points made by these three scholars indicate gaps in the legal framework to protect vulnerable groups.

Discussions around the concepts of home, family and household run through all the studies and an insight into what homelessness means to a large majority of populations. It becomes clear as one reads study after another that right to shelter remains an empty promise as majority of constitutions in the region are cleverly worded to avoid justifiable duty (with exceptions of countries like South Africa whose constitution has provisions for first and secondary generation rights which makes housing a justifiable right). Shelter, therefore, for poor women in the urban areas become a privilege for those who are innovative in cheating the system (as is illustrated by the experience of Boniswa in New Cross Roads captured by Oldfield and Boulton) or it becomes surety for those who are financially secure.

The effects of entrenching poverty and impact of HIV/AIDS and the effects of marco economic policies that have affected service delivery. From Bless to Shlyter, we get echoes of people's voices as they narrate their life stories, their lived experiences and perception of sharing limited space, overcrowding accommodation, and housing in the city, on disputes, conflicts and unfairness surrounding land tenure and distribution, inheritance and dealing with the realities of living with HIV/AIDS.

Seventeen researchers (17) who took part in production of the thirteen (13) have managed to undertake and present well argued academic and policy reference materials while capturing the voices and human suffering of women, men, boys and girls. Reading this book, one experiences an emotional roller-coaster going through one story after another. All the different studies have undertaken research and documented people's life experiences in the urban areas of Blantyre Malawi, Naledi in Botswana, New Cross Roads in Cape Town, George Compound in Lusaka Zambia and Ha Thetsane in Maseru Lesotho.

The authors, who were part of this program, maintained the theme of looking at Gender, Generations and Living Conditions yet brought diversity to these issues by highlighting of rights, abuse,

discrimination, and a gap in the delivery of services by municipal state organs. The different studies have managed to lay a foundation for policy direction without compromising the human element. The studies have been written simply, clearly and, therefore, a must read for a wide spectrum of readers) I am especially giving it a thumbs up for media practitioners! The stories and experiences of men, women, boys and girls captured in this book are moving and are told in a manner that gives a face and a human dimension to housing and urban life.

Now on issues for further research; Some of the studies have unveiled complex cultural dimensions to space-sharing in the city and how that raises issues of privacy, potential abuse and homelessness, the study by Chipeta on gendered separation of space in Blantyre Malawi raises critical issues for policy and administrative action but the study refrains from providing concrete, suggestions on how the issues raised could be dealt with. These are the dilemmas of researching on areas which are as complex as the ones undertaken by GRUPHEL. The issues that have been discussed under Gender Generations and Living Conditions point to a stark need for research into cross border sexual exploitation of women as a result of poverty and encounter with urban challenges, another issue that might be taken up is that of sex work and the gender implications of this on every day living.

The different dimensions of HIV/AIDS should definitely continue as the consequences of the pandemic are still being felt by all population in the region. To round up, I want to reiterate that the book is timely, and is a useful reference manual for development and media practitioners, academics, policy makers, and gender activists as they collectively struggle to implement the undertaking of BPFA, SADC Gender and Development, Agenda 21, Millennium Review, Poverty Reduction Strategies and National Development Plans.

Guide to Contributors

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