

Exploring an Inextricable Relationship between Feminization of Poverty and Feminization of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT Feminization of poverty has been identified as a major factor informing the state of feminization of HIV/AIDS in many parts of Africa and Zimbabwe is no exception. The researchers are of the view that these two factors in Zimbabwe need to be addressed in tandem if the battle against poverty and HIV/AIDS will ever be won. This paper, through a review of literature, aims to explore the relationship between poverty and HIV/AIDS. Findings indicate that the two phenomena bear an inextricable relationship, with both, mutually and reciprocally reinforcing one another. The following dynamics, directly or indirectly influence the two concepts: patriarchy; phenomenon of bride price; female-headed households; gender inequality; poverty; and traditional practices. The paper recommends the following to address the two concepts: diluting cultures and patriarchal forces; changing mindset on gender roles; affirmative action to empower women; mainstreaming gender neutral education; zero tolerance against sexual violence; and women's economic empowerment. The paper has largely been premised on the Human rights Based Approach.

INTRODUCTION

Although Africa is statistically the poorest continent among the five continents of the world according to the United Nations economic computation, it is perhaps significant to appreciate how this state of poverty affects different population segments of the continent. This is because of the realization and revelation that poverty in many contexts displays a gendered dimension (Jackson 2002; UNDP 2008). This means that poverty displays and embraces the concept of *feminization of poverty* (Kang'ethe 2013). Observably, there is a higher degree of poverty among women in Zimbabwe as the country is the third poorest country in the globe. This can be predicted or explained by the fact that the country has had poor political leadership that does not allow democratic political participation, coupled with the fact that the country was slammed with global economic sanctions meaning that its scope of market especially from the western world markets is limited. Perhaps of grave concern to the government, HIV/AIDS campaigners, researchers and possibly by the whole world is the inextricable relationship between feminization of poverty and the feminization of HIV/AIDS prevalence (Kang'ethe 2013,2014a). Perhaps and realistically also, it is easier to conclude there is a relationship existing between

feminization of poverty and feminization of HIV/AIDS. This is because many poor countries in Sub-Saharan Africa appear to be also seriously affected by HIV/AIDS (Jackson 2002), of course intensity varying from country to country. It is therefore critical that research is undertaken to unearth the factors that could possibly be driving the relationship between the two. For example, these researchers possess the knowledge that feminization of poverty does not affect Islamic countries the same way it affects non-Islamic countries. This therefore means that there are dynamics that interplay to determine the extent and magnitude of the relationship and predictability of how feminization of poverty influences feminization of HIV/AIDS.

Problem Statement

The disturbing questions as to why women in Zimbabwe are more prone to poverty and HIV/AIDS need to be addressed through research, debates and discourses presented in this paper. The impacts of feminization of poverty and feminization of HIV/AIDS undoubtedly affect families and households as women are usually the custodians of families and oversee the day to day running of their households. These two phenomena are grave and are a recipe of problems that are likely to affect the quality of life of the

children, the elderly and even men themselves. It is therefore important that various factors contributing to these phenomena and the relationship between the two concepts are brought to the fore with the hope of possibly coming up with solutions or interventions to address or mitigate their effects.

METHODOLOGY

The paper has used a review of literature to exhume a few factors that underpin the relationship existing between the concept of feminization of poverty and feminization of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe. The researchers have consulted books, journals and other publications to develop their paper on the phenomena of feminization of poverty and feminization of HIV/AIDS.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Factors Underpinning Both Feminization of Poverty and Feminization of HIV/AIDS

Inextricable Relationship Between Feminization of Poverty and Feminization of HIV/AIDS

According to Kang'ethe (2014a), feminization of HIV/AIDS is the phenomenon of women increasingly becoming prone to HIV/AIDS when compared to their male counterparts. Feminization of poverty occurs when gender becomes the determinant of poverty, where inequalities between men and women lead to women becoming generally poor than men (Medeiros and Costa 2008). The following factors underpin the concepts feminization of HIV/AIDS and feminization of poverty.

In traditional households, women are usually the drivers of households, having to do an array of household and related chores such as cooking, fetching firewood, feeding the children, attending to the goats and cows, tilling and preparing the land, attending to the elderly and the sick, and taking care of their male counterparts (UNDP 2008). These researchers consider it unfair that women are usually the population that faces the wrath of poverty more than their male counterparts. This is also unarguably because of patriarchal power dynamics and arrangements that place man as the director of the activities than women and children perform (Kang'ethe

2009; Lekoko 2009). Several factors interplay to determine the pace and magnitude of the feminization of poverty, all of them placing women at higher risk of poverty. Low income is the major cause of feminization of poverty. For example single mothers experience a higher risk of poverty because their income is not sufficient enough to bring forth their children if they are the only breadwinners in the family. This in turn affects the children's well being and their psychosocial functioning stifled (Smyke et al. 2007). This is so because low income lowers children's possibilities to attain good education and nourishment. In many contexts, women find themselves doing low paid work that affects their capacities to adequately take care of their families. These researchers would like to see the government and other women friendly bodies pertinently consider investing more in the problems of women. This is because feminization of poverty especially in poor African countries is threatening to take away any gains in the quality of life these countries had attained when modernization and industrialization took some strong grounds (Kang'ethe 2014b).

Patriarchy

Around the world, many countries are dominated by a distinctly 'masculine' culture. This implies embracing a state in which countries adopt a patriarchal view of gender roles in which the man is the head of the family and the decision-maker (Kang'ethe 2009). Zimbabwe is largely a patriarchal society where men have more power than women at both at home as well as in the work place. They therefore have more power in decision making and influence in the society. The position of women in patriarchal societies takes the role of being a mother and the home maker responsible for the nurturance of children. Men are therefore the decision-makers while women implement their decisions. While traditionally men were the breadwinners, men's position of responsibility and accountability as family providers is changing fast as they leave the tasks to women. Perhaps this is because of changes in the economic dynamics of many countries such as higher rates of unemployment, change of gender roles, or men's irresponsibility of passing over their responsibility to their female counterparts. However, despite the fact that some women are increasingly becoming breadwinners, ironically the phe-

nomenon of patriarchy is still in force, sometimes condoning men to control the income of their female counterparts.

Unarguably, patriarchy dis-empowers women. This is because they are sometimes overlooked when decisions have to be made, either at home or at work. Patriarchy embraces some values and norms that impede a woman's control over her labour productivity either at home or in her workplace, if she happens to be the breadwinner. Hence, women are more prone to poverty than men because they do not have power over their own income (Sen 1990). Some social and cultural norms can be very retrogressive to an extent of oppressing women and preventing them to take or gain access to formal employment (Sen 1990).

Patriarchy has another dimension in that it offers a platform for women to be prone to HIV/AIDS. As it paves way for women's powerlessness and decision making as well as economic disempowerment, this powerlessness also applies in influencing dynamics associated with marriage and sexual life. Women's power to negotiate for sexual relationships with male partners is stifled. This makes them easier prey to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. With men being perfect transmitters of the virus and also being five times more promiscuous than women, this can explain why in many countries women are more infected by HIV/AIDS than their male counterparts. This is the state of the feminization of HIV/AIDS. This scenario validates an inextricable relationship between feminization of poverty and feminization of HIV/AIDS (Walker 2002). Once girls and young women enter into a stable relationship, it often becomes difficult for them to insist on condom use. As a result, HIV infection rates among married women are significantly higher than among single women. In Zimbabwe, for example, among females aged 15–24, HIV prevalence ranges from 6.2 percent among women who had never married, up to 14.2 percent among those currently married or in union and up to 26 percent among those divorced or widowed (Shisana et al. 2010).

The Phenomenon of Bride Price Facilitates Feminization of HIV/AIDS

Undoubtedly, patriarchy and other types of customary and traditional pursuits put women at risk of HIV/AIDS. Such includes wife inherit-

ance and the payment of bride price, or the so called *lobola* (Kang'ethe 2014c). The fact that men pay '*lobola*' for their wives in Zimbabwe makes them feel as if they have right to control them, even if it means being cruel to them. This has the effect of disempowering women leaving them with no choice but to follow the whims and aspirations of their husbands. They have little or no say when it comes to sexual activities in the bedroom. For example they cannot advocate for safer sex methods in their marriages and this predisposes them to HIV/AIDS more than their male counterparts. Even if they notice that their husbands have been promiscuous but due to ignorance of their rights, economic dependence on men, and in some instances, lack of education, they may not raise their voices and therefore remain immensely vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

On a negative score, patriarchy in many communities in Africa condones the phenomenon of males engaging in sexual relationship outside marriage. Taking the case of Botswana, there are some proverbs that indicate that societies in the yester years condoned men's engagements with multiple and concurrent partners (Kang'ethe 2009). The case in Zimbabwe may not be very different in that some communities condone wife inheritance (Kang'ethe 2014c). The fact that unmarried women are usually stigmatized especially in patriarchal societies leads to women becoming easier prey to men in the hope of getting a husband. It is the researchers' view that in most cases, men play tricks and make love with many women who could be desperately seeking a marriage partner.

In many countries especially of the developing world, the patriarchal-derived social norms have especially disadvantaged the position of the girl child. Some communities ascribe to the thinking that a girl child is different from the boy child and that the girl child will be married and leave the family (Kang'ethe 2009). She is therefore not given equal opportunity as the boys in important life determining phenomena such as education acquisition. This is why in many patriarchal based societies, boys' enrolment in primary schools is higher than that of the girls. This perpetuates the cycle of poverty because the girl child will be susceptible to poverty, abuse and hugely be under the control of a man. This is likely to throw her into a state of poverty with no means of emancipating herself from the poverty trap. This gender segregation is one of the

factors that have weakened women and thereby making them uncompetitive in the job market as well as themselves feeling they are tools of men to be steered the way men opt (Bianchi 1999). However, countries which have been patriarchal such as Botswana and Namibia but have achieved perfect gender parity index (GPI) need to be emulated. Gender Parity Index indicates the ratio of boys versus girls' enrollment at school. If the two genders are the same, then that particular country has a perfect gender parity index (Kang'ethe 2009, 2010).

Female-headed Households

Incontrovertibly, no evidence of feminization of poverty in Zimbabwe is presented well than in the phenomenon and cases of female-headed households, with 68% of all female-headed households living under the Total Consumption Poverty Line in 2003 (UNDP 2010). The economic crisis in the last decade disproportionately affected women through the informalisation of employment sectors such as food processing and the textile industry. These sectors, which were erstwhile hugely female dominated collapsed after land reform programme of 2008 (UNDP 2010). Perhaps the global increase of the female-headed households could be a result of the perfidious impacts and effects of globalization, modernization, eurocentrism and civilization (Kang'ethe 2014b). Perhaps also the effects of the collapse of Zimbabwean economy as a result of political interference with the White farmers and their exit from the economic domain must have affected all sectors, female-headed households being pushed at the brunt of economic malaise. Therefore, if Zimbabwe is to address the phenomenon of feminization of poverty, it must selectively and affirmatively target the female-headed households. In these researchers' perspective, nowhere else should affirmative action be critical than in helping the female-headed households (Horrel and Krishnan 2007). Observably and realistically, children from single mother households tend to be disadvantaged when compared with their peers. This is because of paucity of resources from their mothers who single handedly toil through thick and thin to have food on the table in the evening (Kanji 2010). There are an array of factors that account for the rise of female-headed

households in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in various countries. These include divorce, separation, pre-marital pregnancy, migration and death. Migration in Zimbabwe is also a critical factor exacerbating the issue of female-headed households. Because of the harsh economic situations in the country, there has been a mass exodus of men migrating to other countries from Zimbabwe in search of work, leaving the women to be the main caretakers of their homes (Pasura 2009). This has sometimes presented an opportunity for separation or divorce especially when men remarry in the foreign land, or upon return to Zimbabwe, they suspect that their partners have not been faithful (Jolly and Reeves 2006). Other factors such as illness and death of husbands especially due to diseases such as HIV/AIDS are on record as adding to the cases of female-headed households.

Inarguably, female-headed households are more susceptible to poverty because they are the sole breadwinners in the family and they play a double role of being the mother and taking the place of the father to their children. The phenomenon stifles women's chance to engage in full employment as they are sometimes forced to physically be with their children especially when they are young. This may open them only to engage in part time jobs which may not be adequately rewarding in terms of wages (Fukuda 1999). The phenomenon of female-household in Zimbabwe is therefore one of the critical factors that continue to widen the gaps of inequality and inequity between women and men, and hence one of the hugest factor contributing to feminization of poverty (Kang'ethe 2013).

Since these female-headed households are exposed to poverty more, some women end up engaging in prostitution. Prostitution is one of the oldest trades in the world, with women and young girls constituting the bulk of those who engage in this trade. This has presented a major source for the spread of the HIV/AIDS among women. Further, women who are living in poverty are likely to engage in sexual activities early because they may do it for money, and some have nothing better to do, because of lack of entertainment and any form of recreation. The age at which one starts to engage in intercourse constitutes a risky behavior which makes women more susceptible to HIV/AIDS.

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment between genders, with usually the female gender being made to take second place in economic opportunities such as job acquisition, appointment to political posts or any other important occupations (UNDP 2008). Gender inequality and inequity are some of the factors that have continued to stifle economic and social empowerment of women, increase the poverty of women and hence offering an opportunity for the feminization of poverty to take root. Gender inequality in society prevents women from utilizing preventive and care services and therefore puts women at risk of poor health. Women in poverty are specifically more vulnerable to sexual violence and risk of HIV/AIDS, because they are most often not able to defend themselves from influential people who might sexually abuse them. If countries are to develop and have its entire population enjoy the fruits of their countries, then the challenge of unequal treatment between women and men has to be tackled. This will make countries fulfill the much desired Millennium Development Goal number three that envisages achieving women empowerment and advancement (UNDP 2008). As alluded to above, patriarchal power dynamics continue to be one of the central drivers of the socio-economic inequalities between men and men (Kang'ethe 2009; Lekoko 2009). Countries then have to work towards diluting these patriarchal power dynamics if these inequalities are to be addressed. Due to patriarchal labour and role assignments and differentiation, for example, women have been assigned the bulk of society's unpaid care giving work such as child care, care for the elderly and the infirm, and any other hospitality associated chores; while men are assigned, albeit hard tasks, but usually handsomely paying occupations or tasks. The phenomenon of low involvement and engagement in wage employment renders women economically more vulnerable and hence embrace feminization of poverty (Kanji 1994; Government of Zimbabwe 1995).

Gender inequality also exposes women more to HIV/AIDS than their male counterparts. Inequalities and Inequities in gender inform inequities and inequalities in income and assets. This increasing economic insecurity makes women vulnerable to sexual harassment and exploitation, either at workplace or at home, and also to engage in prostitution to have food on their ta-

ble at the end of the day (Loewenson and Whiteside 1997). Thus, women are vulnerable not only to HIV/AIDS infections, but also to the economic impacts of HIV/AIDS. Thus, feminization of poverty drives feminization of HIV/AIDS (Kang'ethe 2013, 2014a).

Poverty

According to Rodrigo and Rajapakse (2010), poverty increases risk behaviours to HIV such as transactional sex and substance abuse. Women's economic vulnerability stifles their development, educational opportunities, access to health care and employment. This leaves them desperate making them to explore and engage in sexual risk taking behaviours such as transactional sex as one of the ways of having the food on the table for their children and for themselves (Kang'ethe 2012). These sexual risk behaviours make them prone to HIV/AIDS. This agrees with Kang'ethe's research in Botswana that validated an inextricable relationship between poverty and incidences of HIV/AIDS. This clearly makes clear that an inextricable relationship between feminization of poverty and feminization of HIV/AIDS exists (Kang'ethe 2004, 2013, 2014a).

Embracing Traditional Practices

Zimbabwe societies embrace several cultural and traditional practices such as wife inheritance and child marriage that promote both feminization of poverty and feminization of HIV/AIDS (Kang'ethe 2014c; Jackson 2002). To this end, Caldwell et al. (1999) contend that women and girls are particularly susceptible to contracting AIDS due to social, cultural, economic and even physiological reasons. According to them, greater risk arises from practices that encourage girls to accept older men as partners in preferences to their peers. Customs such as early marriage, inheritance of a deceased brother's wife and some other sexual practices etc., make the rate of infection higher in girls than the boys (WHO 2004; Kang'ethe 2014c).

Religious Beliefs Contributes to Both Feminization of Poverty and Feminization of HIV/AIDS

In Zimbabwe, there are churches which marry their children at a tender age and encourage

polygamous marriages. This is popular with the white garment churches (*mapostori*) for example Johane Masowe, Vadzidzi, and Johane Marange, just to mention a few. This largely contravenes the basic right of the girl children to education. This predisposes the young girls to HIV/AIDS. According to Nleya (2013), these apostolic churches have their beliefs which put their members at risk of contracting diseases, death and poverty as well. This is why members of these sects experience a higher mortality rate because it is illegal to even visit health services for treatment. A report by Nleya (2013) on these sects is reported below:

"25% of deaths were of teenagers, apostolic groups and domestic workers. About a quarter of the deceased were between 15 and 19 years of age. Most were affiliated to an apostolic group and in domestic service," the report reads. Most of the apostolic churches were still lagging behind on several developmental issues, hence the need to positively engage them. Pregnant women are not allowed to visit health institutions and are made to deliver their babies at home, often leading to maternal deaths due to complications. The sects also prohibit immunisation of babies, contributing a great deal to child mortality" (Nleya 2013:1).

This shows how women are made vulnerable to poverty and HIV/AIDS due to religious beliefs. However, it needs to be made clear that it is usually men who implement these retrogressive beliefs because they are the elders of the church and they do not allow women to be leaders in their church. This further validates how patriarchy is being embraced in the religious circles as well. To say the least, women are therefore robbed of their rights to make decisions that are good for them. Since women in apostolic churches are not allowed to visit clinics, they end up having a large number of children and yet some of them are not allowed to have formal employment. This worsens their economic situation that trickles to vulnerability to poverty and men's dependence, both of which can inform their susceptibility to HIV/AIDS.

Biological Reasons Contribute to Feminization of HIV/AIDS

Although there are many external factors that influence the feminization of HIV/AIDS, notable also are the biological and sociological factors

that place women to be more at risk than men. Women are at greater risk of HIV infection through heterosexual sex than are men simply by virtue of an unequal exchange of genital secretions. The risk of transmission of HIV from a man to a woman is approximately 1 in 1,000 for each sexual contact, whereas the risk of transmission from a woman to a man is much less (approximately one in 2,000) (Royce et al. 1997). Perhaps this explains why men are perfect transmitters of the virus than women. The positioning of genital organs and the fact that one is a recipient and the other is a donor are also crucial factors. Socially also, men are generally five times more promiscuous than women (Kang'ethe 2009).

Possible Salient Factors to Address Feminization of Poverty and Feminization of HIV/AIDS

Diluting Cultures and Patriarchal Forces

This involves removing cultural practices that oppress women or suffocate the women's voices that may help in emancipating themselves from the prevention endeavors against both poverty and HIV/AIDS. These cultural practices include child marriage, wife inheritance after widowhood, polygamous marriages, cultural expectations of subservience in sexual matters and the lack of property rights for widows or single women. Women in Zimbabwe also are a major source of economic wealth in many rural parts of the country. These women have limited control over the income they generate due to cultural taboos and traditional practices that place men as the controller of household resources. Hence, it is of paramount importance that the governments and NGOs advocate to discourage cultural practices that deny women the right to benefit from their toil and labor (Goonsekere and De Silva-De Alwis 2005). These researchers advocate for a paradigm shift among the whole society to result to a situation in which women are seen equal to men and that they should be allowed to control their economic productivity, and also their reproductive health rights. This therefore requires a lot of effort to de-culturalize or reduce the effects of the patriarchal mindset deeply rooted in most of the societies especially of the developing world. These aspects are likely to reduce feminization of poverty and possi-

bly raise their control in sexual issues that can also mitigate feminization of HIV/AIDS (Kang'ethe 2013, 2014a).

Changing Mindset on Gender Roles

Since gender is a constructed concept, it is of paramount importance to change the mindset of people pertaining gender roles (Kang'ethe 2009). The government and stakeholders in society should play a major role in leading the way towards ensuring gender equality through public education and policies. Concerted efforts need to be made to review and re-adjust perceptions that cast women in roles of inferiority. This may make the society and governments consider a fairer distribution of resources. This can positively help in mitigating the phenomenon of feminization of poverty. With poverty being tackled, its benefits will hopefully spill over to mitigate the phenomenon of feminization of HIV/AIDS (Barnett and Whiteside 2006; Kang'ethe 2013, 2014a,).

Affirmative Action to Give Women More Decision- making Powers

Governments should create political space for women in the parliament so that they can enjoy the same political power as men. This can help change men's and women's mindset over the position of women and men in terms of power dispensation. However, this may also not be enough if people's mindset towards women empowerment does not change. For example although South African government has shown immeasurable commitment to empower women in all socio-economic and political circles, women are still not enjoying equal status. The increasing phenomenon of domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV) are clear indicators of that skewed power phenomenon (WHO 2013). To adequately fight both feminization of poverty and feminization of HIV/AIDS, women must be put in positions of decision-making organs in local and state government throughout the country as well as throughout Africa. Women should be empowered to have leadership roles in key national government institutions such as the ministries of finance, national planning and justice (WHO 2004). In addition, women should be in decision-making positions in civil society, local chambers of commerce and local youth or-

ganizations that directly interface with the grass-roots populations. It is important to state without vagueness that female representation in national cabinets in Africa should go beyond the obligatory "Ministry of Women or Gender Affairs." When women are viewed as such, even in the homes, men will also listen and consider their ideas and decisions and not just thwart them down.

Mainstreaming Gender Neutral Education

It is the process of evaluating the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and equality is perpetuated (UNDP 1998). This will be important if people are educated in this area and see women just as equally important as men.

Zero Tolerance Against Sexual Violence

Government and all stakeholders need to lead the fight against sexual violence against women. Official, societal and personal silence on sexual violence against women is deafening in many parts of Africa (WHO 2004). In particular, perpetrators target female teenagers in some parts of the country, and thereby potentially setting off a chain of events that may leave the young women not only emotionally scarred for life, but also at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. To end sexual violence, government officials would have to deny perpetrators of sexual violence, political, economic, legal and social sanctuary. Zero legal tolerance against sexual violence should be enforced and culprits subjected to the long arm of the law. Women should be encouraged to come forward with cases of sexual violence and the society should treat them with compassion while the legal system takes its course. This will help women come out in the open in cases of abuse and in so doing, they will be sorting the necessary support they may need as victims of abuse. This may include counseling and how to deal with the trauma that they would have gone through (Callender and Dartnall 2011). As a re-

sult of steepening the penalty for sexual offenders, rape cases and sexual abuse may decrease, and thereby also lower the chances of women being exposed to HIV/AIDS. This may lower the state of feminization of HIV/AIDS (Kang'ethe 2013, 2014a).

Women's Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment for women is a very important strategy as a tool of emancipation against feminization of poverty and HIV/AIDS. This can be done through implementing projects that women participate in, and also make it possible for them to get loans from banks to do their own projects. Economic empowerment goes hand in hand with educational empowerment. For women to be adequately empowered, they need to be educated first so as to be able to get employment in the formal sector and also compete for top positions in the workplace. There should be free education for all so as to make sure that everyone has a chance of going to school and not be limited by money.

Theoretical Framework

The Human Rights Based Approach

The human rights based approach is about empowering people to know and claim their rights as well as uphold respect for one another with regards to human rights of all the citizens (Scottish Human Rights Association 2012). The escalation of feminization of poverty and feminization of HIV/AIDS can be to some extent be blamed to the disregard of human rights for women because of gender inequality and patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society. Human rights approach emphasizes on the need for a realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in order to reduce the vulnerability of women to poverty and HIV/AIDS. With the human right approach, there are greater opportunities of letting people participate in shaping their decisions. It also means increasing the ability of those with responsibility of fulfilling rights to recognize and know how to respect those rights, and making sure that they can be held accountable. This approach can be effective in the effort of trying to combat the vulnerability of women in that it upholds their rights, takes care of gender disparities and seeks to

empower women so that they know their rights and be able to make informed decisions. There are five principles which go with the human rights approach and included: participation, accountability, empowerment, legality and non-discrimination and equality and these can all be used to fight the feminization of poverty and the feminization of HIV/AIDS (Scottish Human Rights Association 2012).

CONCLUSION

Just like in many countries of the globe, Zimbabwean women are more vulnerable to poverty and HIV/AIDS than men. This calls for attention as women are the carers of children, elderly and run households. They are also the engines effectuating food security tasks for communities. There is need for urgent steps to be taken by government and other organizations such as the NGO's in alleviating the effects and causes of feminization of poverty and HIV/AIDS. There is need to critically look at all the possible underpinnings behind the two concepts of feminization of poverty and HIV/AIDS. There is also strong need to look at gender inequality and inequity that expose women to poverty and HIV/AIDS. This is also important in order to make a significant score in the implementation and effectuation of the Millennium Development Goal number three that envisage to achieve meaningful women empowerment. These are efforts to combat both feminization of poverty and feminization of HIV/AIDS and therefore arrest Millennium Development Goals number three and six. Goal number six aims to curb HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increased Education and Awareness on HIV/AIDS

Education about HIV/AIDS is a key factor in mitigating the effects of feminization of HIV/AIDS. This is because many people especially in the developing part of the world fall prey to HIV/AIDS due to ignorance about HIV/AIDS aetiology and transmission.

Economic Empowerment of Women

Poor countries such as Zimbabwe need to come with newer ways of empowering women.

Empowered women would be able to negotiate with men as far as sexual reproductive health is concerned. Empowered women are also an asset as far as empowering their children economically is concerned. This is critical especially in empowering the girl children who usually and easily fall prey of poor economic circumstances.

Dilution of Patriarchal Cultures and Customs

Although cultures are important, it is incumbent upon countries to isolate progressive and retrogressive aspects of cultures so that those that continue to facilitate the process of women disempowerment are worked on, or discarded altogether.

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