



# International Journal of **Sociology and Anthropology**

Volume 7 Number 9 September, 2015

ISSN 2006 - 988x



*Academic  
Journals*

## ABOUT IJSA

The **International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology (IJSA)** is published monthly (one volume per year) by Academic Journals.

**International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology (IJSA)** is an open access journal that provides rapid Publication (monthly) of articles in all areas of the subject such as Socialization, post colonialism, kinship and Descent, Culture, ethnography etc. The Journal welcomes the submission of manuscripts that meet the general criteria of significance and scientific excellence. Papers will be published shortly after acceptance. All articles published in IJSA are peer-reviewed.

### Contact Us

Editorial Office: [ijsa@academicjournals.org](mailto:ijsa@academicjournals.org)

Help Desk: [helpdesk@academicjournals.org](mailto:helpdesk@academicjournals.org)

Website: <http://www.academicjournals.org/journal/IJSA>

Submit manuscript online <http://ms.academicjournals.me/>

## Editors

**Prof. Roland Armando Alum**  
*Senior International Research consultant,  
ICOD Associates of New Jersey,  
Trustee: DeVry University (New Jersey Campuses),  
USA.*

**Dr. Roseline M. Achieng**  
*Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535  
South Africa.*

**Dr. Fidelma Ashe**  
*School of Policy Studies  
University of Ulster  
Newtownabbey  
BT37 0QB  
Northern Ireland*

**Prof. Silvia Ciotti**  
*Department of Environmental Science,  
St. John International University  
Italy.*

**Dr. C. I. David Joy**  
*United Theological college,  
Benson Town P.O.  
Bangalore-46  
India.*

**Dr. Kewal Krishan**  
*Department of Anthropology  
Panjab University  
Chandigarh-160 014  
India.*

**Prof. Isabella Crespi**  
*Ph.D Sociology and Research Methodology  
Professor of Cultural Sociology  
Department of Education  
University of Macerata  
Italy.*

**Prof. M. Isabel Garrido Gómez**  
*Professor of Legal Philosophy  
Faculty of Law  
University of Alcalá  
Spain*

**Dr. Amani Hamdan**  
*Ottawa University  
1440 Heron Road APT 710  
Ottawa, ON  
K1V 0X2  
Canada*

**Dr. Brian Milne**  
*106 Glen Road, West Cross, Swansea SA3 5QJ, Wales,  
UK.*

**Dr. Stephen Vertigans**  
*Applied Social Studies,  
Faculty of Social Science  
Robert Gordon University,  
Aberdeen,  
UK*

**Dr. Md. Emaj Uddin**  
*Department of Social Work,  
University of Rajshahi,  
Rajshahi-6205,  
Bangladesh.*

**Dr. John Horace Enemugwem**  
*Department of History & Diplomatic Studies,  
Faculty of Humanities  
University of Port Harcourt,  
Port Harcourt,  
Rivers State,  
Nigeria.*

**Prof. Eleonora Kormysheva**  
*Director of the Golenishev Egyptological Center,  
Russian State University for Humanities Moscow,  
157265  
Miusstkaya square 6  
Department of the History of Orient,  
The Institute of Oriental Studies,  
Russian Academy of Sciences,  
Moscow 103031  
Russia*

## Editorial Board

**Dr. Hyun-Chin Lim**

*President, Korean Association of Political Sociology  
Dean, College of Social Sciences  
Seoul National University  
Seoul 151-742,  
Korea*

**Dr. Nels Paulson**

*Assistant Professor of Sociology  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
332E Harvey Hall  
Menomonie, WI 54751  
USA.*

**Dr. Samuel Law**

*MD FRCP(C)  
Assistant Professor,  
Department of Psychiatry,  
University of Toronto.*

**Dr. B. B. Mohanty**

*Professor and Head  
Department of Sociology  
Pondicherry University  
Pondicherry 605 014,  
India.*

**Dr. Rashid Solagberu Adisa**

*Agricultural and Rural Development Specialist  
Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural  
Development,  
University of Ilorin,  
Ilorin, Kwara State,  
Nigeria.*

**Dr. Joy Asongazoh Alemazung**

*Lecturer and International Student Officer  
Hochschule Bremen (University of Applied Sciences)  
School of International Business (SIB)  
Werderstrasse  
Bremen,  
Germany.*

**Dr. Julia Maria Wittmayer**

*Scientific Researcher & Consultant  
DRIFT (Dutch Research Institute for Transitions),  
Erasmus University Rotterdam,  
The Netherlands.*

**Dr. Rukhsana Gazi**

*Associate Scientist & Head,  
Health Systems and Economics Unit,  
Health Systems and Infectious Diseases Division,  
ICDDR, B  
Mohakhali C/A  
Dhaka 1212  
Bangladesh.*

**Dr. C P S Chauhan**

*Professor of Education & Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences,  
Aligarh Muslim University,  
Aligarh  
India.*

**Dr. Sunita Bose**

*Assistant Professor  
Department of Sociology  
SUNY, New Paltz  
New Paltz, NY 12561.*

**Dr. Matthew M. Chew**

*Assistant Professor  
Department of Sociology  
Hong Kong Baptist University  
Kowloon Tong, Kowloon  
HKSAR,  
China.*

**Dr. Eswarappa Kasi, Ph.D**

*Guest Faculty,  
Department of Anthropology,  
University of Hyderabad,  
Hyderabad- 500 046,  
Andhra Pradesh,  
India.*

**Dr. Hoon Chang Yau**

*Assistant Professor of Asian Studies  
School of Social Sciences  
Singapore Management University  
Singapore.*

**Dr. Stephen J. Hunt**

*Department of Sociology and Criminology,  
Faculty of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences,  
University of the West of England,  
Bristol,  
UK.*

**ARTICLES**

**Research**

**Comparative analyses of linguistic sexism in Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo 189**  
Amanuel Raga

**Art as communication of rural identity: Some photographs by Mario Giacomelli 197**  
Laura Appignanesi

**Assessment of the implementation of the national policy on orphans and  
vulnerable children in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria 204**  
OLAGBUJI Yetunde Winifred and Obehi Hilda OKOJIE

*Full Length Research Paper*

## Comparative analyses of linguistic sexism in Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo

Amanuel Raga

College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Jimma University, P. O. Box 5219, Jimma, Ethiopia.

Received 17 December, 2014; Accepted 21 July, 2015

**This study tried to examine how linguistic sexism manifests through the lexicons of Afan Oromo, Amharic and Gamo in the light of the social and cultural lives of the speakers. The data for this study were collected from native speakers through elicitation. These data were analyzed based on Critical Discourse Analysis approach. As the study showed, among the three languages, semantically asymmetric terms, metaphors of terms that denote human beings, use of man/he as generic, and administration titles exhibit sexism. This has resulted from the male dominance in the socio-cultural lives of the societies. The linguistic sexism observed in this study are now conventions of the languages. Researches show that language conventions shape the way speakers think. Hence, it is believed that these sorts of linguistic sexism among the languages maintain the socio-culturally created gender bias ideologies of the societies. This scenario would be a challenge for the current gender mainstreaming endeavors of Ethiopia. Therefore, a thorough study should be carried out on these languages and the rest of the country's languages to assist in combating the broader gender inequality scenario in Ethiopia.**

**Key words:** Linguistic sexism, Afan Oromo, Amharic, Gamo, Male dominance.

### INTRODUCTION

Ethiopian people are categorized under two ethno-linguistic families called Afro-asiatic and Nilo-saharan. These families comprise of over 70 different ethno-lingual communities with over 200 dialects (Central Statistics Agency, 2007). All of the groups have lived together in centuries of diversities and unity described as innumerable social, linguistic, and cultural differences. There were important points of contacts among the groups that resulted in a vast amount of assimilation of populations, very considerable adoptions of languages, innumerable conversions from one faith to another and

extensive intermarriages (Lubo, 2012 citing Twibel 1998). Assimilations of populations and adoptions of languages in Ethiopia have begun with the Cushitic and the Semitic in the central highlands of Ethiopia between the 12 and 13th centuries. It was accelerated during the Oromo expansions in the 16th century and assimilation policies of the Ethiopian Emperors between the 16 and the 19th centuries (Lubo, 2012 citing Galperin, 1981). Due to the political, cultural, linguistic, and religious interactions among its ethnic groups, Ethiopia is said to have developed in to a linguistic area (cf, Tosco, 2000).

E-mail: [amanuel.raga@ju.edu.et](mailto:amanuel.raga@ju.edu.et). Tel: +251 913 188268.

Authors agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Consequently, languages of the Ethiopian linguistic area share as many as 13 linguistic traits (Thomason, 2001; Tosco, 2000). Among these, gender distinction in second and third person pronouns and the use of the form equivalent to the feminine singular for plural concord are the two features concerned with grammatical gender. However, the sociocultural meanings of these features were not explained in these studies.

Among the languages of Ethiopian linguistic area, this study has focused on the languages of the Oromo, the Amhara, and the Gamo. These societies are patriarchal and patrilineal. Culturally, among these societies, male and female children have unequal places. Male children used to be trained for leadership while female children were trained to serve the males. Male children received particular care and respect from childhood onwards. From the very beginning they were trained for their later function as patriarch of the family and administrator of its property. In the absence of their fathers, the first born sons served as the patriarch of their families. They had the privilege of representing their fathers in public meetings and affairs. In contrast, daughters participated in all domestic and extra domestic tasks. They aided in rearing their younger brothers and sisters. They served food and washed the feet of their younger brothers and sisters. The cultural gender bias among the societies can be taken as the possible source of gender ideologies which inevitably reflect through their languages as linguistic sexism.

Though there are epistemological gaps with reference to Ethiopian languages, studies show that: sexist language marginalizes women, makes them invisible and creates the impression of a male dominated society. It also demeans women to marriage material, and reinforces stereotypical gender roles. Furthermore, it limits women's opportunities and even their aspirations. What is more, it causes women to view themselves in a negative way (Mills, 1995:95). Therefore, linguistic sexism psychologically affects women.

Furthermore, research findings have established the direct correlation between the gender correctness of the official language and the economic possibilities of women in society. International advocacy organizations have also found evidence of the relationship between language practices in recruitment policies and women's competitiveness in the labour market in post-communist countries. For example, the Human Rights Watch report on Ukraine (August 27, 2003) contains information on gender discrimination in the language of job advertising and interviews, which results in excluding women from the work force (Tolstokorova, 2005).

Therefore, to tackle the problems, anti-sexist language campaigns were launched and were carried out in most industrial countries such as the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Scandinavian countries. Similar campaigns have also

been underway in transnational organizations such as the United Nations, the UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, etc. The main objective of these campaigns are to counteract linguistic gender discrimination as a component of the global problem of gender inequality (ibid).

Nevertheless, in Ethiopian academic arena, any effort to combat gender-exclusive language is not yet considered by scholars. So, it is not represented by a theoretically grounded scientific approach. Therefore, as input for the local or global gender mainstreaming movements and as a kind of 'starter' for other profound research activities in this field, this study has investigated linguistic sexism in the lexicons of Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo.

Specifically, the study has investigated how semantically asymmetric lexical items, semantic connotations of terms that denote male and female human beings, use of the terms 'man/he' as generic, and administration titles, manifest linguistic sexism in Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo. And it explained the social and cultural sources of the problem.

Directly or indirectly, this study is believed to benefit various national and international gender policymaking bodies, human right organizations, and researchers. Thus, it could help the Ethiopian Ministry of Women's Affairs, Human Rights Watch, and UN Women Watch in their fight against gender inequality as it pinpointed the sources and nature of linguistic gender bias in Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo lexicons. In addition, this study may contribute to similar works that seek to fill the epistemological gap observed in the field of language and gender study.

Though globally the study of linguistic gender bias has been underway for more than three decades, in Ethiopia, it has barely been started. Consequently, in the context of Ethiopian languages, there are only three works that are related to this study. These are: Amanuel Raga (2007) or Amanuel Raga and Hirut Woldemariam (2011) on Afan Oromo, Roza Tadesse (2009) on Tigrigna, and Zelealem Leyew (2010) on Amharic. Except that of Zelealem Leyew's, the other two works are MA theses.

Amanuel Raga's (2007) MA thesis is entitled, 'Gender bias ideology as manifested in the grammatical structure of Afan Oromo'. In the context of Ethiopian languages, this work is a ground breaking work. As this work reveals, in Afan Oromo, the gender assignment systems of nouns follow the social gender bias ideologies of the speakers. Nouns which denote objects that are small in size, powerless, and associated with negative social values are categorized as feminine in gender, while those which are large in size, relatively powerful and have positive social values are categorized as masculine in gender.

Furthermore, in Afan Oromo, masculine nouns are used as the generic form of most of the nouns and using the feminine forms of these nouns make their meanings deviate from the meanings of the generic ones that is, the

masculine forms. What is more, the semantic contents of verbs that are related to marriage and the relationship of wife and husband designate the superiority of male in the societies that speak the languages.

Moreover, this study shows that figurative use of feminine nouns that denote female human connote cowardice, shyness, weakness and the like; while masculine nouns that denote male human connote concepts like bravery, strength, boldness and the like. In addition, personal names also reflect the cultural gender bias ideology in the speech communities through their semantic/pragmatic connotations. Finally yet importantly, as Amanuel's work unravels, some professional and administrative titles do not have feminine forms, though currently women can hold the positions they denote. This work was published under the same title in 2011 in collaboration with Hirut Woldemariam.

Roza Tadesse's (2009) MA thesis which is entitled, 'Gender bias ideology of Tigrigna speakers', is very similar with that Amanuel (2007). Their similarities are in terms of language features examined and findings. So, according to Roza's work, Tigrigna, reveals the same gender bias reported by Amanuel's work on Afan Oromo.

Zealelem Leyew's (2010) work on Amharic is entitled, 'Asymmetrical representation of gender in Amharic'. This work deals with the linguistic and pragmatic representation of gender in Amharic. As this work shows, gender representation in Amharic is asymmetrical and it is heavily influenced by pragmatics. In Amharic, masculine is the default gender with more prominence than feminine. The linguistic coding of gender carries socially significant meanings reflecting a male-biased grammar. Specifically, the personal and demonstrative pronouns, generic and proper nouns, nominals and other word classes are inherently masculine. Moreover, masculine gender operates not only for animate nouns but also for inanimate ones. What is more, in Amharic, any noun with animate feature is encoded as male in the verb. Whereas, masculine expresses augmentation while feminine expresses diminution in Amharic.

On the other hand, some distantly related works such as, Sena (2008) Tufero, (2005), and Jeylan (2005) discuss that Afan Oromo proverbs reveal the subordinate sociopolitical and cultural places given to women among the language community. Besides, Wondwosen (2000) shows the same gender bias among the Oromo society through his study on the practice of *laguu*. According to Wondwosen, *laguu* is a culturally established linguistic taboo that restricts married women's linguistic right by prohibiting them from calling their husbands' and their in-laws' names in the name of 'respect'. As Wondwosen argues, this practice limits the linguistic right of married Oromo women.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main purpose of the study was to analyze the linguistic

sexism reflected in lexicons of Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo. Thus, it was based on primary data collected through elicitation. The criteria for the selection of the three languages were numerosness of their speakers and the linguistic and cultural contact among their speakers and other language speakers of Ethiopia. According to CSA 2007 report, the sum of Afan Oromo and Amharic speakers was about 60% of the total population of the country. In addition, as already discussed in the background of this paper, in Ethiopia linguistic and cultural assimilations were caused mainly by speakers of these languages. Therefore, each of them was selected as an example of its respective family (Cushitic and Semitic). On the other hand, Gamo was selected from the Omotic family because of its higher similarities with most of the languages of the family and claimed linguistic and cultural relations in its geographical setting (Wondimu, 2010; Hirut, 2013).

The data for this study were collected from native speakers of the selected languages who live in Jimma and Arba Minch. Accordingly, six elderly informants were selected from each of the three language communities by giving equal chances to both men and women. Then, the 18 informants were elicited on the linguistic data required for this study. In this process, audio recordings and note taking were employed. What is more, the data on cultural gender ideologies among the speakers of the languages were collected from ten elderly cultural elites of the respective language group through interview.

The data were analyzed qualitatively in the contexts of the cultural gender ideologies of the speakers of the three languages. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used as the theoretical approach of this study. CDA focuses on real instances of social interaction and its theoretical framework has distinctive power to view the relationship between language and society, language and gender, language and other social variables. The critical approach sees language use as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1995) and it interprets social practice from linguistic perspective by intervening on the side of dominated and disadvantaged groups.

A study in light of CDA focuses on the exploration on a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event with the macro-social structure and micro-conversational settings. CDA holds the notion that language use is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped. It constitutes situations, objects of knowledge and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258). According to this idea, the constitutive aspect helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo and it contributes to transforming it as well.

Language use can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between social classes, ethnic groups and gender categories. For example, power asymmetry will be realized through an unequal representation and positioning of women and men in different status. Considering this particular inherent function, language in use may be ideology-laden and may be sexist passing off conventional beliefs and prejudice. Sexism in language usually lies beneath the surface. To unfold such underlying qualities, CDA provides a critical perspective to make the covert aspects visible to people.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Under this part, the result of the study would be presented and discussed based on the linguistic and socio-cultural data collected from native speakers of Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo. In this process, the paper has tried to present how semantically asymmetric lexical items, semantic connotations of terms that denote male and female human beings, use of the masculine form as generic, and administration titles, reflect linguistic sexism



in Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo. Based on the specific objectives of this study, issues like ideological implications of the linguistic sexism in the languages and their similarities and differences have been compared and contrasted with the universally known gender biased linguistic features along the four sections which are geared towards presenting specific linguistic features. Unless specified, the linguistic data presented in each of the sections are from Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo correspondingly.

### Semantically Asymmetric Lexical Items

This section presents how linguistic sexism manifests in Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo through semantically asymmetric lexical items. In this regard, the linguistic practices among the three languages differ from each other. However, the socio-cultural sexism to be discussed in this regard are the same. Incidentally, the mandatory and exclusive grammatical collocation of some verbs that express socio-cultural practices with nouns referring to woman or man are somewhat similar in Afan Oromo and Amharic.

In Afan Oromo and Amharic, the grammatical obligation of some verbs to collocate only with nouns that refer to man or woman referent has resulted from the socio-cultural practices that the verbs express. For instance, the verbs [mana-tti hafu:] [k'omo mek'ret] 'to be left unmarried' in both languages, respectively, take only nouns or pronouns referring to female human as their arguments. This grammatical rule of word collocation has been set by the socio-cultural practices of the language communities.

On the other hand, Afan Oromo has separate lexical items for the verb 'to marry' for male and female, that is, [fu:du:] and [he:rumu:], respectively. In this case, the feminine form has the meaning, 'to be given in marriage' /'to be sold' unlike the masculine form which has no negative connotation. To give light to how this has occurred, in Oromo society women get married in a way which is equivalent to 'getting sold'. When women get married, their parents are compensated with bride prices. This is done to replace the physical labor that the woman used to render at her parents' home. Hence, the verb [he:rumu:] which has a literal meaning, 'to be sold' expresses this cultural practice. This verb takes only feminine nouns as its argument as in, [hintall-i gurba:tti he:umte], lit. 'the girl has been sold to the boy'.

Likewise, the parallel Afan Oromo verb for male is [fu:du:] 'to take woman for marriage' only takes masculine nouns as its argument as in [gurba:-n hintala fu:de], 'the boy took the girl for marriage'. If any of these separate verbs switch their arguments as in [gurba:-n hintalatti he:rume], 'the boy has been taken by the girl for marriage' or [hintall-i gurba: fu:te] 'the girl took the boy for marriage', it would mean that the girl is physically

or economically more powerful than the boy and she agitates him.' Therefore, the utterances augment the social status of the girl and at the same time it demeans the social status of the boy.

Unlike Afan Oromo, Amharic and Gamo do not have separate verbs for male and female. They just use the terms [magibat] and [èkídès] 'to marry' but they distinguish the gender of the argument by affixing separate gender marking morphemes. Yet, this does not mean that the language speakers are better in terms of the socio-cultural gender bias involved in marriage practices and the roles of male and female in marriage lives. To that matter, the semantic asymmetry between the nouns [abba: mana:ha:da mana:], [bal/mist], and [adde/mòtjó] 'husband/wife' in all the three languages respectively express the power relation between men and women in the societies. In these societies, it is the husband that is supposed to be more powerful and lead the wife in the way he fancies. In addition, the metaphorical meanings of the terms 'husband' and 'wife' among the three societies shows the existence of male dominance.

Culturally, among the three societies, women get married only when chosen by men. However, linguistically, this is manifested only in Afan Oromo and Amharic. Accordingly, the Afan Oromo and Amharic verbs [haftu: ta?u:], [k'omo mek'rèt] 'to be left over/not chosen for marriage', respectively, show this socio-cultural bias in the language communities. If women are not chosen for marriage they are denoted as [haftu:], [k'omo k'ær] 'leftover'. These phrases have negative social meanings. In addition, the absence of parallel words that denote males that are left unmarried by any chance among the Oromo and the Amhara, shows linguistic bias.

Traditionally, among the Oromo, the Amhara, and the Gamo one of the duties of women is rearing as many children as possible because children provided the husbands with manual power. However, this is linguistically expressed only in Afan Oromo and Amharic. Accordingly, the phrase [idʒo:lle: abba: mana: ije:f horte], [lɛbaluwa lidʒotʃ wɛlədɛtʃilɛt], 'she gave children to the father of the house/husband' also show the power imbalance between the husbands and the wives that is reflected by the 'giver-taker' positions assumed in the phrases. In these particular cases women are at the serving position and men are at the position of getting served. What is more, among the societies, male and female are at the superior and subordinate positions respectively. He is the administrator while she is the administered. In contrast, though not linguistically expressed, the cultural gender bias among the Gamo society with regards to husband and wife matches with that of the Oromo and the Amhara.

Generally, among the traditional Oromo, Amhara, and Gamo societies the patriarchs were members of families with the highest socio-cultural hierarchy. They controlled and exploited their wives and children. They were always

expected to be leaders in the families and wives were considered as men's properties. As a result, terms that express marriage related activities and gender roles of husbands and wives in the languages of the societies reflect these facts. Incidentally, there are some degree of linguistic variations among the three societies though.

### Metaphors of Terms for 'Man/Boy' and 'Woman/Girl'

In this section, we will see linguistic sexism which manifests through connotative meanings of terms that denote male and female human beings in Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo. As this study unraveled, among the three languages, terms that refer to male are used metaphorically to express concepts that have positive social values. On the contrary, those that refer to female are used to express concepts with negative social values. In view of that, terms like, [di:ra/gurba:], [wənd/ wənd lidʒ], [adde/naʔa] 'man/boy' are used figuratively to express concepts such as 'heroism', 'cleverness', 'strength' and 'bravery. Quite the reverse, terms such as [dubarti:/durba], [set/lidʒagərəd], and [mɛtʃ'û/naʔi] 'woman/girl' are metaphorically used to express negative concepts like cowardice, rumormonger, weakness, and shyness.

### Use of masculine Man/He as Generic

This section deals with how some terms in Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo define the male gender as normative or generic in light of the socio-historical lives of the speakers of the three languages.

The three linguistic groups are patriarchal societies. Traditionally, among these societies, [abba:], [abbat], and [ǝwǝ] 'the patriarch' was the head of his family, he is in command of political, social, and economic lives of his family in particular and the society at large. According to Alpher (1987), if a society is patriarchal, generic forms of different terms would be the masculine forms. The findings of this study also confirms Alpher's argument too.

Currently, the past images of the patriarch in the traditional lives of the three societies are reflected through generic terms formed from masculine words like [abba:] of Afan Oromo and [ǝwǝ] of Gamo which literally mean 'father', and [baləbət], of Amharic which literally mean 'husband' serve as indefinite forms to express 'ownership'.

Regardless of the obvious denotative meaning difference between the Amharic, the Afan Oromo, and Gamo terms mentioned above, one can say that the use of the terms as generic forms in all the three languages have resulted from women's exclusion from leadership and property ownership among the societies. In other words, since men were in command of every important property among these societies, the generic terms that expressed ownership in their languages had taken the

masculine forms.

What is more, in the past, among the three societies only the patriarchs or the eldest sons in the families represented their families in any domestic and public affairs. Therefore, the generic use of the masculine terms [abba:], [baləbət], and [ǝwǝ] which mean 'oneself' have originated from the past traditions of representations by the male.

Last but not least, masculine terms, like [nama], [səw], and [ǝddi] 'man' and the masculine pronoun [isa], [issu], and [izǝkǝ] 'he' are respectively used as generic forms in all the three languages. Unlike the other terms discussed above, the usage of these terms is common among other languages like English. Based on this observation, some scholars have examined the matter and reported two major problems that arise from using 'he/man' as generic in English. First, the usage confuses people as to whether one is referring to male alone or both male and female (Schneider and Hacker, 1973). Second, they were found to cause females think that they are unrepresented (Harrison 1975; Martyna, 1978). Therefore, scholars suggest that, these terms need to be avoided in generic expressions by using gender neutral terms like 'humankind' instead of 'man', and 'they or s/he' in place of 'he'. Otherwise, they should be used along with their feminine counterparts as, 'man/woman' and 'he/she'.

### Administration titles

This section presents the sexism in administration titles of Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo. As found out in this study, there are differences among the three languages regarding this issue. The differences have originated from basic language variations and significant socio-political differences of the history of the three linguistic groups. Therefore, to show the differences clearly, the socio-politically driven linguistic scenarios would be dealt with one by one.

To start with, until 1880s, the Oromo people used to be administrated by a traditional socio-political system called Gada. This administration system was democratic for the male while it marginalized women (Negaso, 2000). However, studies show that the Oromo women had better human right protections and respects than any other groups of women in their vicinities or even the current Oromo women (Amanuel and Hirut, 2014).

Women's marginalization in political and military activities during the Gada system can be verified from the administration titles of the time. For instance, titles such as: [abba: gada:] 'leader of the Gada council', [abba: du:la:] 'war leader', [abba: dubbi:] 'chief speaker of the Gada council', and [abba: c'affe:] 'chairman of the legislative assembly' reflect male domination in the Gada administration system. These titles do not have feminine forms because practically, women were excluded from political and military activities. In fact, we cannot judge

the past with the present mentality. Nonetheless, it matters because language maintains this sort of gender bias through its conventions (Bonvillian 2000), and affects the present life style of a society.

To see how the past gender bias among the Oromo made its way to the present through language convention, one needs to see chronological political changes of the society. The Macha Oromo, (area of this study) started to abandon the Gada administration system in favor of kingship system in 1880s (Negaso 2000). Yet, this transformation did not bring women to leadership but it even worsened their subordination by denying them the human rights and respects they had during the Gada period. The then titles also confirm this fact. For example, masculine administration titles, [mo:ti:] 'king', [go:fta:] 'lord' do not have parallel feminine forms. Linguistically, the last noun [go:fta:] 'lord' seem to have [gi:fti:] 'lady' as its parallel. However, since 'lord' and 'lady' are not equal in status, the titles are also asymmetric. In Oromo society, someone who used to be addressed by the title [go:fta:], 'lord' was a male leader while [gi:fti:], 'lady' was only the title of a lord's wife. So, woman addressed with this title did not have the right to lead.

The Macha Oromo's kingship system which had some elements of the Gada system was altered by the Amhara king called Menelik II who conquered them around the year 1885. (c.f. Amanuel and Hirut, 2011) As a result of the conquest, the Oromo were forced to totally abandon the Gada administration system and adopted the feudal administration system introduced by Menelik II (Negaso, 2000). Regarding gender balance in administration, the feudal system by its nature was not a good political system elsewhere. Hence, it encouraged the continuity of male domination in administration arena. Hence, administration titles of the time verify this. For example, [abba: lafa:], 'land lord', [abba: k'oro:] 'land owner' do not have parallel feminine terms.

The socialist political system which has followed from the long stayed feudal system in Ethiopia, nominally preached that women are equal to men. However, it only organized them to form women's associations which had insignificant role in political leadership. So, during this period, like women of any other Ethiopian ethnic groups, the Oromo women were not politically empowered. However, since Afan Oromo was not the language of administration in this period, there is no linguistic proof for this generalization.

In terms of holding political administration posts, the present seems to be better for Oromo women. Nowadays, a few women are seen on administration posts. Yet, as the contemporary administration titles in the language show, the past male dominance in political and social arenas still manifests through terms that refer to administration posts and profession titles. For examples masculine nouns [dura ta:ʔ-a:] 'chairman', [bulɸ-a:] 'administrator', and [abba: ganda:] 'chairman of a village' refer to administration posts in the present lives of

the language community. These terms do not have feminine forms, in spite of the fact that currently women are allowed to hold the posts. In addition, the grammar of the language also allows the formation of parallel feminine titles by alternating feminine terms with the masculine ones. For instance, [abba:] 'father' can be substituted with [ha:da] 'mother' to form [ha:da ganda:] 'chairwoman' of a village'. Furthermore, feminine gender markers [-e:ssu:] and [-itu:] can be altered with the masculine gender marker [-a:] to form feminine titles [dura t-e:ssu:] 'chairwoman' and [bulɸ-itu:] 'female administrator'. So, the past gender bias ideology has made to the present through socially created gender biased linguistic convention (Amanuel and Hirut, 2011). Having discussed the linguistic sexism in Afan Oromo administration titles, let us now see the scenario in Amharic in this regard.

Like the Oromo, the Amhara have been patrilineal and patriarchal society. However, there are visible differences among the political worldviews of the traditional administration systems of the two. Among these differences, the major one worth mentioning is the level of rights and respects given to women. In this regard, the traditional Gada system of the Oromo, which in fact was male dominated in many respects was much better (Amanuel and Hirut, 2014) than the Amhara's long existed kingship system. The traditional political system of the later was not only male dominated but also disregarded women's rights and respects. However, the Amharic language does not overtly show this reality.

Regarding administration titles, overtly, Amharic looks relatively a gender fair language. Many Amharic administration titles are gender neutral. For instance, titles like [gəʒi], 'governor', [astədadari], 'administrator', [məri], 'leader', [azaʒ], 'commander', [lik'əmənber], 'chairperson', [dedʒazmaɸ], 'major general', and so forth are gender neutral terms. To that matter, few other administration titles that are not gender neutral have feminine counterparts. Titles like [nigus/nigist], 'king/queen' and [geta/ıməbet], 'lord/lady' fall in this class. Nevertheless, traditionally, women had almost no political leadership positions among the society. So, it takes ideological investigations to depict the covert linguistic sexism involved with these titles.

A closer look in to the societal usages of gender neutral Amharic administration terms show that these terms are sexist. For instance, in Amharic there are some exclusively male personal names which are derived from political titles. For example, the male name [mərr-a], 'he lead' is derived from the gender neutral term [məri] 'leader' and [astədaddir], 'you govern 2MS' is derived from the gender neutral term, [astədadari], by suffixing masculine gender marker [-a] and by infixing the second person masculine gender marker, [- i -] respectively. However, these sort of names do not have feminine forms in spite of the fact that the morphology of the language allows this possibility by adding the feminine

gender markers [-tʃ] and [-i] to form feminine names like, [mærra-tʃ] and [astədaddir-i] (Zealelem, 2003).

Furthermore, in spite of the existence of the feminine title [nigist] 'queen' which has the same root with the masculine [nigus] 'king' in Amharic, historically there were very few women who have ever taken the leadership positions among the Amhara. So, Amharic administration titles are covertly sexist.

So far, we have looked at how Afan Oromo overtly and Amharic covertly depict linguistic sexism through administration titles. Now, we will see what this linguistic scenario looks like in Gamo language. Like the Amhara, the Gamo practiced kingship political system of their own. However, this practice was altered by the same 1880's Amhara's conquest history discussed earlier in relation to the Oromo. So, administration titles in Gamo have two phases, that is, prior and post Amhara administration.

Prior to the conquest, the Gamo were led by a king. So, they had the term [kaʔo], which means king. Following from male domination in leadership, this term is masculine and it has no feminine form. The wife of a [kaʔo] is called [godenitso] but someone with this title had no political leadership position. Other administration titles like [da:na], 'leader', [huduga], 'a leader subordinate to the king', [ʃ'omitʃʃa], 'political advisor', and etc. were also masculine titles.

The post conquest leadership practice introduced by the Amhara followed its source. So, the Amharic administration titles were borrowed in to the Gamo language and used with minor morphological modifications. Thus, we find titles like [astadadare], 'administrator', [mare], 'leader', [azzaʒe], 'commander', [lik'ambare], 'chairperson' in Gamo.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study tried to comparatively explore how linguistic sexism manifests through lexical items of Amharic, Afan Oromo, and Gamo. It also tried to explain its sources. As found out in this study, semantically asymmetric lexical items, semantic connotations of terms that denote male and female human beings, use of the masculine forms as generic, and administration titles among the three languages exhibit sexism.

Specifically, the study showed that some terms that express socio-cultural practices of the societies exhibit semantic asymmetries. The terms discussed under this section can only collocate with one of the genders. This has resulted from the socio-cultural gender stereotypes they express/ denote. For example, if we take cultural marriage practice in the language communities; it legitimizes male supremacy and female subordination. Hence, the separate terms for male and female express this situation. As a result, the grammar of the languages take up that as conventions and restrict the collocation of the two separate forms with both genders.

Furthermore, the study unraveled that terms that refer to female are figuratively used to express different concepts that have negative social values. On the contrary, their masculine parallels are used to express concepts that have positive social values.

In addition, the study revealed that some masculine terms are used as generic forms among the three languages. This practice defines the male gender as a normative and challenges the visibility of women in the societies. What is more, it also creates communication barrier.

Last but not least, nouns referring to administrative posts in different historical periods of the three societies reflect male dominance in political arena. In addition, the study showed that male's egoistic practice of the past has been transferred to the present socio-political lives of the societies through language conventions. At present, at least we could see a few women participating in administrative professions. Nevertheless, because of the past male dominance, we do not see some masculine titles representing females as well.

Boroditsky (2001), Gordon (2004), and Feigenson (2004) argue that language practices shape human thought. Therefore, the sexism in Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Gamo especially in the area of lexical asymmetry and figurative use of masculine and feminine terms may negatively influence the speakers' thoughts. In other words, the fact that the languages grammatically place men and women on positive and negative ends respectively, may force the societies to think and act likewise (cf. Amanuel and Hirut 2011).

Therefore, to stop or reduce the linguistic sexism which manifest at the level of language conventions like the use of 'man/he' as generic and masculine administration titles that do not have parallel feminine forms, it is necessary to introduce gender neutral terms.

However, changing the linguistic features alone is not enough to deal with the gender imbalances in the societies. So, the ideological roots of the bias in the socio-cultural lives of the people should be examined and dealt with to change the whole scenario. As Tolstokorova (2005) argues, to counteract linguistic sexism, primarily in those countries that are not yet open to ideas of linguistic gender democracy, it requires meticulous theoretical elaboration. This would open a way for challenging the global civil society by showing that linguistic sexism is not only an ethical problem, but also primarily a violation of human rights. She suggests that this can be achieved through united efforts of researchers, women's rights advocates, the mass media, NGOs, government structures, and all those who are concerned with the democratic developments worldwide.

## Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

## REFERENCES

- Amanuel R, Hirut W (2014). 'Linguistic sexism as religious offence among the Oromo.' *J. Lang. Cult.* 5(1):1-8, April 2014 Available online <http://www.academicjournals.org/JLC> ISSN 2141-6540.
- Amanuel R, Hirut W (2011). 'Gender bias ideology as manifested in the Grammar of Afan Oromo'. *Journal of Language and Culture* Vol. 2(10), pp. 162-173, October 2011 Available online <http://www.academicjournals.org/JLC> ISSN 2141-6540
- Bonvillian N (2000). *Language, Culture and Communication*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc. pp: 373-392.
- Boroditsky L (2001). *Metaphoric structuring: Understanding time through special metaphors*. Stanford University. Academic press. pp:1-22.
- Central Statistics Agency (CSA)(2007). *Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia*. Central Statistical Office. Addis Ababa.
- Fairclough N (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Harlow, Essex: Longman.
- Fairclough N, Wodak R (1997). 'Critical discourse analyses. In T. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as social Interaction*. London: Sage Publications.
- Galperin G (1981). *Ethiopia Population, Resources Economy*, Moscow, Progress Publishers.
- Gordon P (2004). Numerical cognition without words: evidence from Amzaonia. *Sci.*, 306: 496-499.
- Harrison L (1975). 'Cro-magnon woman-in eclips', *Sci. Teacher* pp.8-11.
- Hirut W (2013). 'Revisiting Gamo: Linguists' classification versus self-identification of the community'. *Int. J. Sociol. Anthropol.* 5(9):373-380, <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJSA>
- Human Rights Watch Report on Ukraine (2003) *Ukraine: Women Facing Job Discrimination*. New York. Online documents at URL <http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/08/ukraine082703.htm>
- Jeylan W (2005). *The Function of African Oral Arts; The Arsi Oromo oral arts in focus*. *Afr. Study Monogr.* 26(1):15-58.
- Lubo T (2012). 'The post 1991 'inter-ethnic' conflicts in Ethiopia: An investigation'. *J. Law Conflict Resolut.* 4(4):62-69, April 2012. Available online at <http://www.academicjournals.org/JLCR> DOI: 10.5897/JLCR11.045 ISSN 2006-9804.
- Martyna W (1978). 'What does "he" mean?' *J. Commum.* 28:131-138.
- Mills S (1995). *Feminist Stylistics*. London & New York: Rutledge.
- Negaso G (2000). *History of the Sayyo Oromo of South Western Wallaga, Ethiopia from 1730-1886*. Addis Ababa: Mega Printing Enterprise.
- Roza T (2008). *Gender ideology of Tigrigna speakers* (Unpublished MA thesis) Addis Ababa University.
- Schneider J, Hacker S (1973). 'Sex role imagery and use of the generic "man" in introductory text'. *Am. Sociol.* 8:12-18.
- Sena G (2008). *The images of women in the proverbs and sayings of the Oromo: the case of west Arsi zone* (Unpublished MA thesis) Addis Ababa University.
- Thomason S (2001). *Language contact: an introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Tolstokorova A (2005) 'Gender Justice in Linguistic Perspective: Global Challenges and Perspectives for Development' on International conference 'changing gender! research, Theory and Policy for Gendered Realities of the 21st century' June 2-3, 2005 Panteion University Athens, Greece.
- Tosco M (2000). 'Is there an Ethiopian language area?' *Anthropol. Linguistics* 42:329-65.
- Tufero B (2005). *Images of Women in Oromo Proverbs*. (Unpublished BA. thesis). A.A.U. Department of Foreign Languages and Literature.
- Twibel S (1998). *Ethiopian Constitutional Law: The Structure of the Ethiopian Government and the New Constitution's Ability to Overcome Ethiopia's Problems*.
- Wondimu G (2010). *Sociolinguistic fact about the Gamo area, South Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: ARCCIKCL.
- Wondwosen T (2000). *The effect of Laguu on women in the Oromo Society*. (Unpublished paper). Ethiopian Language Research Center. Addis Ababa University.
- Zealealem L (2003). 'Amharic personal nomenclature a grammar and sociolinguistic insight'. *J. Afr. Cult. Stud.* Rutledge: Taylor & Francis Group 16(2):181-211.
- Zealealem L (2010). 'Asymmetrical Representation of Gender in Amharic'. In *EJOSSAH* 7(1& 2):71-112.

*Full Length Research Paper*

## Art as communication of rural identity: Some photographs by Mario Giacomelli

Laura Appignanesi

University of Macerata, Italy.

Received 23 March 2015; Accepted 5 August, 2015

The Aesthetic Idealism of Friedrich Schelling gave artworks a role of mental representation of the world. In the present paper, we try to integrate this gnoseological value of Art with the contemporary sociological approach of System Theory. Nowadays, we are witnessing a rapid change in the methods of communication, thanks, first of all, to globalization and digitalization. In spite of this, our thesis is that Art still preserves all its power, both as a communicative instrument and as a hermeneutic tool revealing reality through heuristic paths. Niklas Luhmann says that in a social system characterized by “operative closure” the structure that ensures autopoietic reproduction is represented by communication. In this sense, artworks can be considered as a medium to communicate identity in a self-referential system. In particular, we take in consideration some photographs by the Italian artist Mario Giacomelli (Senigallia, 1925; Senigallia, 2000). As in the myth of Plato's cave, his photographs are like “shadows” on the wall: the projection, through the artist’s sensitivity, of the socio-cultural identity of peasantry in Italian inland after the Second World War. The aim is to experiment an original reading of these pictures, without referring to the models and knowledge of arts critics. Rather, a conceptual scanning is sorted, to bring out the texture of socio-cultural identity related both to the subjectivity of the artist and the objectivity of his representation. Thus, the product of creativity becomes the link, the “structural coupling”, between the psycho-emotional sphere and other systems: family, economy, religion, etc. And Art becomes necessary to preserve, transmit and reproduce the identity in social systems; both at an ontological and an epistemological level.

**Key words:** Socio-cultural identity, peasantry, art, communication, system theory, structural coupling.

### INTRODUCTION

“Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible.” These are the sublime words with which Paul Klee summarizes, we might say, the gnoseologic function of Art. To support this statement, we can start from the Aesthetic Idealism of Friedrich Schelling. According to the

German thinker, through philosophical reflection, man has separated rationality from the natural context; with Art, instead, these two spheres are reassembled and objectified in artworks, which represent the meeting point between Reason and Nature. In fact, this philosophic

E-mail: [laura.appi@libero.it](mailto:laura.appi@libero.it)

Authors agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

orientation considers an artwork as the combination of an irrational force with the knowledge of the world in which the artist is immersed. The whole philosophical current from Kant to Hegel, which extols dreams, fantasy and imagination, presents the artistic sentiment as a way of leading to the truth. Thus, Idealism gives artworks a role of phenomenological or mental representation of the world. Therefore, we might say that Art is seen as a hermeneutic tool that allows us to come to know the reality through heuristic paths.

In the present paper, we try to integrate this conceptual value of artworks with the contemporary sociological approach of System Theory. Niklas Luhmann says that in a social system characterized by "operative closure" the structure that ensures autopoietic reproduction is represented by communication. Nowadays, we are witnessing a rapid change in the methods of communication, thanks, first of all, to globalization and digitalization. In spite of the consequent overturn of the paradigm "medium-form", our thesis is that Art preserves its whole power, both as a communicative instrument and as an interpretative tool of sociological culture.

In order to develop the argumentation, we use the conceptual toolkit provided by System Theory. In fact we assume (using the Luhmann's terminology) that Art is not a "closed autopoietic system" but a "structural coupling" between functionally differentiated subsystems.

Thus, the product of creativity is the link, the "structural coupling", between the psycho-emotional sphere and other subsystems: family, economy, religion, etc. And artworks are necessary to preserve, transmit and reproduce identity in social systems; both at an ontological and epistemological level.

The methodology is the inductive method: we analyze some photographs, depicting a concrete situation, to get to the general principles. In particular, we take in consideration some photographs by the Italian artist Mario Giacomelli (Senigallia, 1925; Senigallia, 2000). The attempt is to experiment an original reading of these artworks, without referring to the models and knowledge of arts critics. Rather, we try a sort of conceptual scanning, to bring out the texture of socio-cultural identity related both to the subjectivity of the artist and the objectivity of the object represented.

In summary, through the poetic narrative that develops with the syntax of the artist's images, we identify the layers of information required to be able to read the social meaning that emerges from the complexity of the inter-systemic territory. Thus, the paper is an interdisciplinary work, where the "landscape analysis" and the "reading of artworks" are not end in itself, but tools to demonstrate a thesis of Sociology. Such disciplinary "pluralism" enriches the discussion and allows us to identify the mechanisms that make up the connective tissue between the various interacting systems. But overall, interdisciplinary is inherent to a systemic approach, that takes into account the complexity and the dynamic relationships between

the various phenomenological aspects.

### **A case study: the inland of the Marche region in the years after the Second World War**

There are two modalities for a thesis's demonstration. It can be done, quoting Plato, and through the *logos* (the logical articulation of concepts) that through the *mythos* (the creative representation).

The imaginary is always the mirror of sociological identity in a particular historical context, in a specific place. Let's take Literature, for example: the routes of the Homeric *Odysseus* set the boundaries of classic Mediterranean culture, just like the map drawn by the protagonist of Paul Auster's *City of Glass* shows the loss of identity in the streets of contemporary New York .

To argue the thesis of the sociological communicative value of art, the paper focuses on the inland of the Marche region in the Fifties and Sixties, and it takes in consideration a special kind of *mythos*: the poetry of images.

Nowadays what we see is a region stretching from the Apennines to the Adriatic sea, with 6,000 sqkm of hills: a mosaic of fields, woods, farmhouses and hamlets. But the landscape of the inland of the Marche region is constituted also by its festivals and typical dishes, small family farms and up-to-date tractors, religious feasts and folk songs. In other words, it is a distillation of the joint action of man and nature articulated over time.

Geography combines with history: from the Picene civilization to the seignories at war, from the torpor of the Papal State to Italian unification, right up to today's Europe. But there is more than this to the narrative of the region: the sword of Federico da Montefeltro, Raphael's paintbrush, Bramante's pencil, Rossini's notes, Leopardi's lines. These different forms of Art express the soul of the area, just like its geology expresses its physical structure. Moreover, every land has its own character. That of the people from the Marche region is described by Guido Piovene as a «skeptical and wise nature, tending to avoid the proximity of all that is great and extraordinary and reduce everything to common-or-garden matter». «Patriarchal rural democracy» is the definition that Piovene uses to describe the traditional society of the Marche region, characterized by an «age-old order», not by «wealth but by decency, based on a few needs, on a natural limitation of consumption: frugality, common sense». The people here have a peevish and kind heart, but above all they are hard workers, passing from the *Métayage* system of fifty years ago to the small businesses of the present day (one every eight inhabitants), which make not only accordions, paper and tobacco, but also footwear, furniture and boats.

The landscape of the Marche region, in fact, takes the form of a journey that, starting from the memories of the

past, leads to the present through a series of transformations based on the people's expectations and on their social and cultural impact. Life in the country was hard in the years after the Second World War. Young women dreamt of moving to town, for its attractions and opportunities, while peasants wished for a steady paycheck at the end of the month. We can cite the historian Sergio Anselmi, who studied the evolution of rural space, reconstructing, in particular, the dynamics of the rural world in the Marche region and highlighting the reasons that, in the Fifties, made many families of the inland decide to establish themselves on the slopes of the hills or migrate towards the towns along the coast. The end of the social and economic system of *Métayage* and its related housing model based on farm houses caused a rural exodus.

However, the traditions and rural culture of the Fifties and Sixties still live in the photographs by Mario Giacomelli, who synthesized and conveyed them with the effectiveness of the emotional strength that only artistic representation can have.

### **Art as communication of rural identity**

Let's consider the conceptual model developed by Niklas Luhmann, who regarded both literary and figurative expressions - the *Art system* - as part of an autonomous and functionally differentiated social system (Luhmann et al., 1995). The German sociologist said that 'Art is a special kind of communication that uses perceptions instead of language, and it operates at the boundary between the social system and consciousness'.

In Luhmann's theory, communication in general is the phenomenological element that makes the existence of a social structure possible through operative closure and autopoiesis, which reproduce a self-referential system in a context of functional differentiation. His hypothesis is that the bridge between these two spheres can be identified in the literary and artistic representations of a landscape made by its inhabitants. If it is true that the environment, both natural and anthropic, is the result of a social, economic and cultural evolution, then the perception of this complex reality by its local artists and writers appears as a heuristic reading path of the territory's very own identity.

The current landscape, where a social stratification adds to its natural one, is the consequence of the work of generations of peasants. Hence, its representation coincides with its poetic description, expressed through the imaginative and emotional power of Art. During a lecture in the town of Ascoli, the painter Tullio Pericoli explained: «*You need to contemplate a landscape carefully, take it in and delve into it, with a combination of science and passion, trying to read it like a map or a table in an encyclopedia, looking for its sense and function. But you also need fantasy to imagine, for example, a big bird*

*next to you, ready to carry you on its back and take you on a flight over that landscape, to show it to you with its manoeuvres, sometimes from a distance, others up close, then from up above or down below, giving you the opportunity to see the whole and its innumerable details».*

To decode the imagery of artistic representations is to read the territory between the lines and catch that sociological and cultural content of the landscape that nourishes the artists who experience it, metabolize it and give it back in the form of Art

Here is the countryside of the Marche region as it is depicted by Mario Giacomelli. The description of a beautiful, hard and authentic world. The furrows in the ground like wrinkles on a face. The thick skin of the territory with the signs of man and time. The sense of the landscape is revealed in the hermeticism of the essential features outlining its harsh gentleness. The poetics of the place is manifested through the traces left by generations of peasants. In Giacomelli's black and white photographic compositions, the contrast between light and shade reveals the power of the lines while the images become a text engraved in dark letters on the whiteness of a sheet of paper.

The texture of the representation reveals a hidden character, the story of a journey, a voyage of understanding. During this journey space takes form, to recover the dimension of an unusual memory. "It was the landscape that chose me" stated Mario Giacomelli, a photographer that opted for landscapes as his preferential subject, a subject that he loved to the point of taking care of it almost as if it were his own child, going to visit it every day.

The artist from Senigallia defined himself as a "realist", and it could not be otherwise, since his aim was to transfer the whole reality before his eyes into images. His silver bromide prints are an extraordinary representation of the rural landscape of the Marche region and its transformation, as he often immortalized the same views in different moments, even at the distance of years. The result is a gallery of valuable and striking pictures of the *Métayage* society, in which it is possible to discover the soul of this region, so deeply tied to work and land (Picture 1).

### **Sociological reading of some pictures by Mario Giacomelli**

Giacomelli captured on film not only images of the landscape, but also impressive scenes dedicated to the work of peasants, like for example the sowing and harvesting of wheat, where physical exertion and celebrations combine. The spheres of the social system recompose in the bare simplicity of the framing: there are backs bent over the land, arms holding children, hands folded in prayer and fingers making joyful sounds with the accordion. Economy, family, traditions and religion are



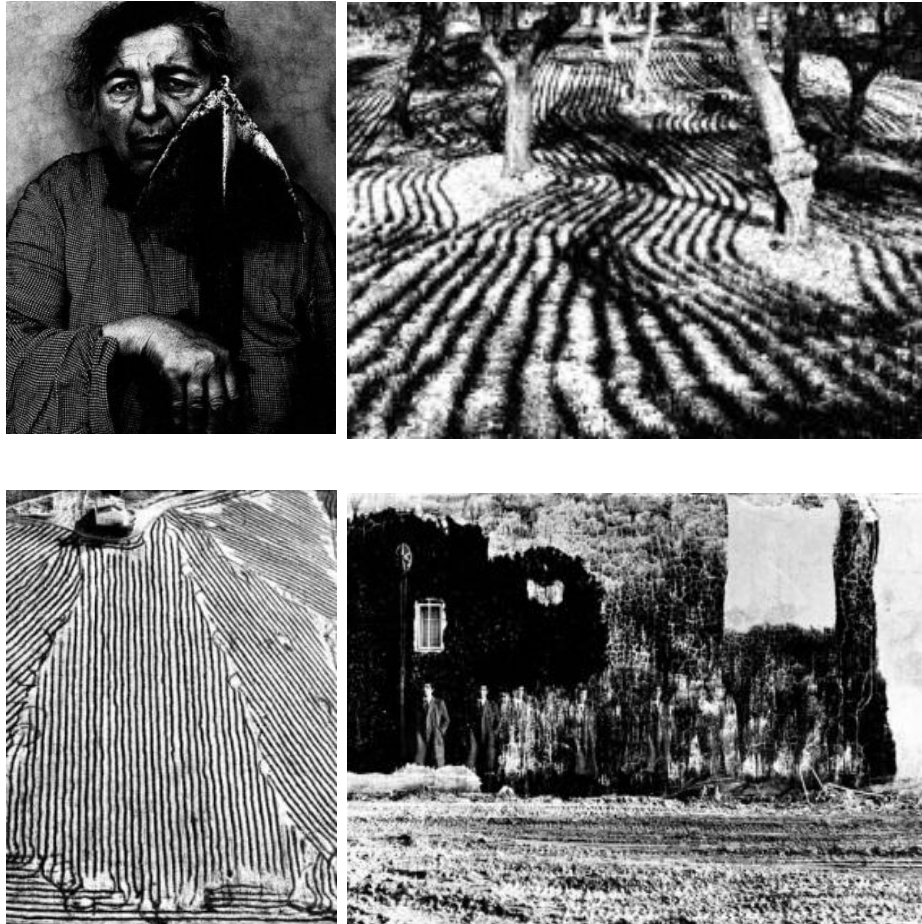


Photographs by Mario Giacomelli  
 Source: official website <http://www.mariogiacomelli.it/> (courtesy of Simone Giacomelli).

the raw material of these snaps, which have an ancient but not elegiac flavor and are of a disarming and honest realism, telling the story of a simple and real world. The gaze, never rhetorical, but intensely poetic, is the reaction to what is seen: the self-observation of the subject and the object mingle.

While browsing through Giacomelli's photographs, we come across a picture of a field with some isolated trees, two of which in the center of the setting, slightly asymmetric. Most of all, we come across dark and sinuous lines on the ground, opening kindly to make room for imposing trunks. The sky is not visible, only the land, with furrows that line and describe it, like undulating pentagrams that extend beyond the framing, suggesting an endless symphony. In ancient times, the practice of plowing a furrow to trace the shape of a village was an act of divination, to be done under favorable auspices. The furrows captured by the artist's lens, which is almost touching the ground, seem to be the marks of that legacy, archetypes of recurring gestures. Clean lines, which seem engraved firmly but run along a path that gently follows the wavy ground and sort of bows before the centuries-old trees. The father tree. But there is no need to talk about pantheism or religious meanings. Trees provide shade and cool relief in summer, wood and warmth in winter, fruit for the peasants and their animals.

Trees and furrows: two presences. Rural culture, which is so strictly intertwined with land, respects them. The magnetic charm of these photographs seems to derive from this combination of strength and gentleness, simplicity and harmony. The furrows dug by man are aligned in parallel with each other like on a written page. The writing of a generation of peasants. Humble people who did not leave individual marks in history, but transmitted their work and their pragmatic intelligence into the natural and anthropic landscape surrounding them. Behind every furrow and every plow there is a man, with his mind, his values and attachments. His physical exertion and his dreams flow inside the furrows, irrigating the land, innervating the trunks of the oak trees, whose roots sink firmly into the earth and branches explode towards a sky that cannot be seen, because the framing cuts out their upward thrust and concentrates there, on the path of the plow, which is repeated always the same and always different, potentially to infinity, for generations. Giacomelli's sensitive and audacious lens captures those drills and reveals their poetic power: their rhythm and elegance. The field, which is written on like a sheet of paper with light and shade, becomes a page of history, a page of life and passion. The land becomes a face lined with scars and wrinkles, that of its people. Furrows that run far away. Escape routes. Trails to follow



Photographs by Mario Giacomelli  
Source: official website <http://www.mariogiacomelli.it/> (courtesy of Simone Giacomelli).

on the way back.

If we continue to browse through the photo album in our flight high over the area, the lens focuses on a map to be deciphered. Sensory spaces in a two-dimensional drawing, where the geometry of the marks is the warp of a fabric woven by human life. The contrast between the light and dark elements define the structure of the landscape, like an X-ray photograph, and brings out the harsh gentleness inherent in the harmony of the shapes. Looking from a distance, it is possible to see that complex order that would be missed out on from up close. The territory and its shape. The territory and its identity. The territory and its economy. The black and white image synthesizes, as in a last will, the fruitful and constant interaction between the rural society and its territory, the epiphany of an intense action capable of scraping the land surface and modifying its shape.

The photograph "Portrait of the artist's mother" is a black and white half-length portrait built on a marked contrast of light and shade. The old face is lined with wrinkles and partially hidden by the flat blade of a spade held perpendicular to the ground. The woman's hand,

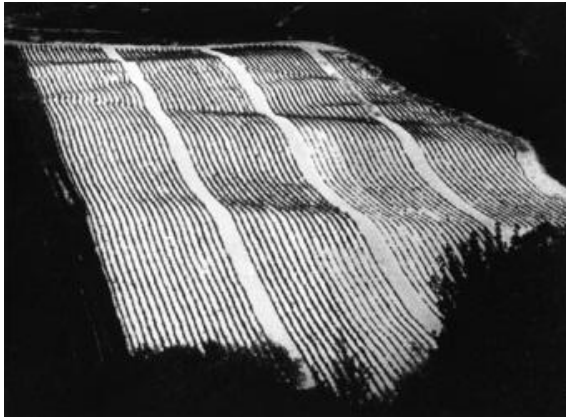
hardened by work, is resting on the haft. The human figure and the tool of her job seem to be competing for the leading role inside the limited space of the photograph.

There is no pathetic nostalgia, it is a proud portrait. The woman's attitude is that of a warrior with her halberd, returning tired from the battlefield. Her face is that of the people born in the countryside of the Marche region at the beginning of the twentieth century, the face of our grandparents. This is the portrait of our land. The chiaroscuro texture tells the hyper-realistic story of a rural world that is not that far back in time.

A territory can be effectively told also in this way, through the portrait of a face, one of its countless faces without a name (Picture 2).

## Conclusions

In the overall approach of a systemic perspective, we affirm that Art is a special means of communication, understood in a constructivist sense. Without illustrating



the well-known stages of communicative process, developed by Luhmann, we emphasize that the artworks can play an important role in the communication process, with reference to socio-cultural identity.

By an inductive method, we took in consideration some artworks concerning a particular area (the inland of the Marche region in Italy) in a particular period (the years after the Second World War), as an example to draw theoretical conclusions: from a particular empirical reality, to the universal dimension of the communicative function of Art. To do this, we integrated the sociological analysis with the poetic-emotional register of the art language.

As in the myth of Plato's cave, Giacomelli's photographs are like "shadows" on a wall, mental representations of the reality produced by the artist: the projection of the subjective social and cultural identity of peasantry in the Italian inland in the years after the War. In this sense, using Luhmann's terminology, his black and white prints can be considered, as a *medium* to communicate identity in an autopoietic and self-referential social system. In fact, the landscape represented by Giacomelli is generated by the interaction between different subsystems, and there's a sort of "structural coupling" that enables this kind of intersystemic communication.

It is also possible to give a hermeneutic reading of these artworks, so that they become useful tools for the understanding, on one hand, of the influence of socio-cultural aspects as generative factors of the anthropized environment and, on the other hand, of the perception of rural identity on the psycho-emotional sphere. Giacomelli's pictures communicate the story of many rural families, their culture and traditions, more effectively than any essay.

By looking at these pictures, through the emotional feelings they arouse, we can understand what the life of the people depicted was like: the role played by their job, party, house, family, prayer ... Those people integrate with the walls and the land to the point of blurring into them. They draw furrows on the fields that stretch out over the ground like an undulating pentagram. Then they leave, they disappear, and we are told about their

absence through the bare shot of empty chairs in a circle (Picture 3).

### Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my thankfulness, for the advice and support provided, to Prof. Fausto Pugnali of Università Politecnica delle Marche, and to his research group on landscape issues, in particular Ing. Giorgia Casagrande Serretti.

### REFERENCES

- Luhmann N (2000). Art as a social system. California: Stanford University Press.  
 Luhmann N (2001). Sistemi sociali. Fondamenti di una teoria generale. Bologna: Il Mulino.  
 Luhmann N (2012). Theory of society. California: Stanford University Press.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baraldi C, Corsi G, Esposito E (2002). Luhmann in glossario. Milano: Franco Angeli.  
 Biagini E (1995). Cartografia e teoria dello sviluppo: un incontro tra strumenti di comunicazione e ricerca scientifica, in Gabassi PG, Tassarolo M, Disegno e comunicazione. Milano: Franco Angeli.  
 Breitenberg V (2008). L'immagine del mondo nella testa. Milano: Adelphi.  
 Cipriani R (2012). Per una sociologia dell'immaginario. Sociologia della Comunicazione 44:149-152. Milano: Franco Angeli.  
 Durand G (1999). L'immaginazione simbolica. Milano: Red.  
 Febbrajo A (1975). Funzionalismo strutturale e sociologia del diritto nell'opera di Niklas Luhmann. Milano: Giuffrè.  
 Febbrajo A, Harste G (2013). Law and Intersystemic Communication. Understanding 'Structural Coupling'. Farnham: Ashgate.  
 Fornasari F (2012). Nulla è senza un segno. La mappa e la rappresentazione del mondo: due casi di studio. Sociologia della

- Comunicazione 44:25-48. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Genovali S (2002). L'evocazione dell'ombra. Mario Giacomelli. Sesto San Giovanni: Edizioni Charta.
- Guarda C, a cura di (1994). Mario Giacomelli. Fotografie 1954-1994. Tenero: Edizioni Matasci.
- Platone. A cura di Reale G (2006). Protagora. Milano: Bompiani.
- Sturken M, Cartwright L (2001). Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wright Mills C (1962). L'immaginazione sociologica. Milano: il Saggiatore.

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Assessment of the implementation of the national policy on orphans and vulnerable children in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

OLAGBUJI Yetunde Winifred<sup>1\*</sup> and Obehi Hilda OKOJIE<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ondo State Primary Health Care Development Board, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Community Health, University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

Received 23 March, 2015; Accepted 5 August, 2015

Nigeria has one of the largest burdens of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the world. In response to these challenges, the Federal Government in Nigeria initiated and adopted the Child Rights Act (CRA) and the National Guideline and Standard of Practice (NGSP) for OVC. However, there is very limited rigorous research evidence and data on the implementation of these intervention policies. It is important for the policy makers and program leaders to make well-informed decisions about the way forward. The study assessed the knowledge about the relevant documents and legislation for the protection of OVC in Nigeria and identified the challenges with its implementation among stakeholders in Benin City. Using a cross-sectional study design with both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, a pretested self administered questionnaire and Key Informants Interview were used to collect data from 11 heads of Orphanages and 33 stakeholders such as heads of the support institutions, policy decision makers and regulators of the orphanages. All (100.0%) of the policy makers had good knowledge of the policy, followed by the heads of orphanages (45.5%) and heads of support institutions (36.0%). The Child Rights' Act was the most common National policy on OVC mentioned by 57.8% of them. A high proportion (45.0%) was of the opinion that the policies have in no way been implemented in Benin City. Major challenges with the implementation of the policies mentioned were inadequate funds, defective monitoring of the activities of the OVC, no adequate budget line and shortage of staff. Training and retraining of the heads of orphanages and support institutions on the relevant policies on OVC and allocation of more funds and services to the orphanages are recommended.

**Key words:** Child Rights Act, National Guideline and Standard of Practice, OVC, policy makers, stakeholders.

## INTRODUCTION

The number of OVC is consistently on the increase in the world with the advent of HIV/AIDS especially in sub-Saharan Africa which is the most highly affected region (Beelen, 2007). Eight out of every 10 children who have

lost parents to HIV/AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2007). In 2005, about 12 million children ages 0-17 lost one or both parents to AIDS and the total

E-mail: [yetundeolagbuji@gmail.com](mailto:yetundeolagbuji@gmail.com).

Authors agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

number of children orphaned from all causes was 48.3 million at the end of the year (UNAIDS and UNICEF, 2006).

### Problem statement

Nigeria has one of the largest burdens of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the world and is facing an orphaning and vulnerability crisis of potentially catastrophic proportions (United Nations Children's Fund and Policy Project, 2004). The number of adults and children living with HIV (a major cause of orphanhood) in Nigeria was 2.8 million in 2008 and this is one of the highest in the world (UNICEF and Policy Project, 2004). The 2008 Situation Assessment and Analysis (SAA) on OVC revealed that 17.5 million (24.5%) of Nigerian children are OVC (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2008). The survey further showed that 7.3 million were orphaned from various causes while the national prevalence of OVC is 24.5% and that of Edo State is 15%.

Evidence also exists to show that OVC in Nigeria live in deplorable conditions and are exposed to neglect, exploitation, abuse and deprived of basic human rights and needs (UNICEF, 2002). Thus, Nigeria is facing an emergency situation in which millions of children are in dire need of care and special protection measures (McKenna, 2010). The burden of poverty makes families and communities unable to cope with the increased number of orphans (McKenna, 2010). Orphanages or other group residential facilities may seem a logical response to growing orphan populations but it can however, impede the development of national solutions for orphans and other vulnerable children. In the worst cases, orphanages can be dangerous and unregulated places where children are subject to abuse and neglect (Feranil et al., 2010).

In most countries in sub-Saharan Africa especially in Nigeria, traditional residential institutions usually have too few caregivers and are therefore limited in their capacity to provide children the affection, attention, personal identity, and social connections that families and communities can offer (UNCF, JUNP on HIV/AIDS and USAID, 2004). Developmental risks can thus be substantially heightened in institutional settings. Institutional care tends to segregate children and adolescents by age and sex and from other young people and adults in their communities, instead of encouraging independence and creative thinking, institutional life tends to promote dependency and discourage autonomy. For many adolescents, the transition from life in an institution to positive integration and self-support as a young adult in the community is difficult. They lack essential social and cultural skills and a network of connections in the community (UNCF, JUNP on HIV/AIDS and USAID, 2004).

In order to support the orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria, the Federal Government of Nigeria initiated and adopted a number of policy frameworks. These include the Child Rights Act (CRA) (2003), which incorporates the UN conventions on the Rights of a Child, and the National Guideline and Standard of Practice (NGSP) for OVC, in Nigeria (National Population Commission and ICF Macro, 2009). Twenty one of the thirty six states (including Edo state) of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory have domesticated the law, and a vigorous advocacy campaign is currently being undertaken by the Ministry of Women Affairs for other states to follow suit (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development Nigeria, 2006; 2008). The goal of the NGSP for OVC in Nigeria is to provide comprehensive, efficient and effective care, support and protection of orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2007). The objectives of the National Guideline are to provide guidance for the development and implementation of interventions for the care, support and protection of orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria, to provide minimum standards in quality of services and activities related to all areas of care, support and protection of orphans and vulnerable children that are socially and culturally acceptable, in accordance with the Federal Government of Nigeria policies, international instruments and internationally accepted best practices. This document also specifies the minimum services to be provided by any programme involved in the care and support of OVC.

Addressing the needs of OVC and mitigating negative outcomes of the growing OVC population worldwide is a high priority for national governments and international stakeholders across the globe that recognizes this as an issue with social, economic, and human rights dimensions. In Nigeria however, there is very limited rigorous research evidence and data on OVC and interventions to inform policies and programs. While most studies carried out on OVC in Nigeria did not highlight the knowledge of stakeholders (involved in the care and support of OVC) about the national guidelines and standard of practice on OVC, a study carried out in Botswana, which is one of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa that has a great burden of OVC revealed that stakeholders lack information about OVC policies and that the OVC policies are not fully operationalized (Feranil et al., 2010). Assessing the level of knowledge of stakeholders on the National Guideline and Standard of Practice on OVC will aid in highlighting the challenges stakeholders and policy makers experience with the implementation of National guideline and standard of practice on OVC.

Many barriers were highlighted with the implementation of the relevant legal documents for the protection of the OVC in different countries. In Botswana and Kenya, the challenges identified included: Lack of coordination amongst the Non Governmental Associations (NGOs)

and support institutions for the OVC, lack of finance to implement the projects, problems in identifying who the real orphans and vulnerable children are (Morantz et al., 2009; Pfeleiderer and Kantai, 2010). The situation analysis on OVC cross-sectional study conducted in the thirty-six states in Nigeria in 2008 aimed at improving the available knowledge for OVC programming with special focus on policy makers and program managers revealed some challenges with the implementation of the legal document for the OVC, which included; Lack of adequate funds, corruption, unqualified staff, lack of manpower and the lack of adequate and functional educational services (Beelen, 2007). This study assessed the knowledge about the relevant documents and legislation for the protection of OVC in Nigeria and identified the challenges with its implementation among stakeholders in Benin City.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study area

This study was conducted in Benin City, the capital of Edo State which spans across three Local Government Areas, namely: Oredo, Egor and Ikpoba-Okha. It is located at latitude 6° 19' 43" N (latitude in decimal degrees) and longitude 5° 36' 14" E. It has a population of 1, 085, 676 persons with Benin being the predominant tribe (Federal Republic of Nigeria, Official Gazette, 2007). The proportion of people living below poverty line in various parts of Edo State is high and ranges between 40 and 83% (Edo State Government, 2011). Poverty incidence is highest among women, children, youths, unemployed and people living with HIV/AIDS. The Benin indigenous society operates a patrilineal system in which there is a strong preference for male children and this also tends to limit in the long term, the contributions of women to the socio-economic and political life in the city (Smart, 2003).

There are 15 government approved and registered orphanage homes (all privately owned) and 46 support institutions in Benin City. Eleven of these orphanages are in Oredo Local Government; three are in Egor Local Government and the remaining one in Ikpoba Okha Local Government. The orphanages in Benin City provide either the residential or non-residential care to OVC and some provide both. Some of the orphanages also have institutions which are Non-Governmental Organizations, Faith Based Organizations and Community Based Organizations supporting the services they render to the OVC. The Department of Child Development in the State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development is directly in charge of the registration of the orphanage homes and it is headed by a Director.

### Study design

This research was conducted using a descriptive cross-sectional study design with a mixed method triangulation concurrent multilevel research approach involving qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection.

Eleven heads of orphanages and 33 stake holders such as heads of the support institutions (support institutions are the NGOs and religious bodies supporting the orphanages), policy decision makers and regulators of the orphanage (Permanent Secretary and the Director of the Department of Child Development in the Ministry of Women Affairs) were interviewed. Policy/decision makers who

are major actors in policy making or program direction and budget allocation as it relates to OVC program were included in the study, while those that refused to participate in the study were excluded. The heads of support institutions/orphanage were purposively selected based on their position and the type of organization they have, while the policy makers were selected based on their positions.

A pretested self administered questionnaire was used to assess the socio-demographic status and knowledge of the relevant documents and legislation for the protection of OVC in Nigeria among the respondents. Key Informants Interview (KII) was used to identify the challenges with implementation of the National Guideline and Standard of Practice for OVC in Nigeria. The KII guide was adapted from a validated tool used in Botswana and Kenya (Feranil et al., 2010; Pfeleiderer and Kantai, 2010) which are two developing countries that have similar socio-economic status like Nigeria. The questionnaire was pretested in Goodwill orphanage home in Auchi which is 150km from Benin and corrections were effected prior to the commencement of the study.

### Data management

All the questions assessing knowledge were scored to give a total of 30 points and converted to percentile with scores <50<sup>th</sup> percentile representing poor knowledge, scores equal to 50<sup>th</sup> percentile as fair knowledge and scores >50<sup>th</sup> percentile as good knowledge. Data from the questionnaire were coded and entered into a computer spread sheet. Analysis was done with the aid of the SPSS version 16.0 software, and presented as diagrams, frequency distribution. Data from qualitative tools were analysed using thematic and content analyses.

### Ethical approval

Ethical approval to conduct the study was obtained from the University of Benin Teaching Hospital Research Ethics Committee and Ministry of Women Affairs, Benin City.

## RESULTS

### Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in Benin-City

Thirty six support institutions out of 46 could be traced. Two policy makers i.e. the Director of the Child Development Department in the Ministry of Women Affairs and the OVC Desk officer participated in this study. Seven key informants comprising two (28.6%) policy makers and five (71.4%) program managers/heads of support institutions were interviewed. There were three (42.9%) males and four (57.1%) females among them. The support institutions included three Faith Based Organization (FBO) of which two were Catholic based organizations and the third one was a Pentecostal based organizations. The other two were a Community Based Non-Organization.

The heads of orphanage between 50-59 years constituted the highest proportion of respondents 4(36.4%), followed by those between 40-49 years with mean age of 56.4 ± 16.0 years. A greater proportion of them were females 8(72.7%) and 72.7% were married

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic characteristics of heads of orphanages in Benin-City.

Demographic characteristics	Frequency(%)N=11
<b>Age (yrs)</b>	
30-39	1(9.1)
40-49	3(27.3)
50-59	4(36.4)
≥60	3(27.3)
Range	36-89
Mean ± SD	56.4 ± 16.0
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	3(27.3)
Female	8(72.7)
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Married	8(72.7)
Separated	1(1.5)
Widowed	2(18.2)
<b>Level of Education</b>	
Primary	1(9.1)
Tertiary	10(90.9)
<b>Religion</b>	
Christianity	11(100.0)
<b>Occupation</b>	
Business	1(9.1)
Computer Scientist	1(9.1)
Nursing	5(45.5)
Pastor	2(18.2)
Teacher	1(9.1)
No response	1(9.1)
<b>Ethnic group</b>	
Esan	3(27.3)
Benin	5(45.5)
Ghanaian	1(9.1)
Owan	2(18.2)

and all (100%) of the respondents were Christians. Majority (90.9%) of the respondents had tertiary level of education while only 9.1% had primary level of education. Nursing was the predominant profession among the respondents 5(45.5%), and so also Benin tribe was the predominant ethnic group among them 5(45.5%) (Table 1).

#### **Knowledge of the National policy on OVC among stake holders in Benin-City**

Figure 1 shows that all (100.0%) of the policy makers had

good knowledge of the policy, followed by the heads of orphanages constituting 5(45.5%) and lastly the heads of support institutions constituting 9(36.0%).

Most (93.9%) of the respondents were aware of the National policies on OVC through seminars followed by newspaper (9.1%) and TV/Radio (9.1%) (Table 2).

#### **National policies on OVC mentioned by stakeholders and suggestive ways of effective dissemination**

The Child Right Act was the National policy on OVC commonly mentioned by 19(57.8%) of the respondents. Others mentioned by a lower percentage of them were the National Guideline and Standard of Practice for OVC (15.2%), and the National action plan (NAP) for OVC (9.1%) respectively. A higher proportion of stakeholders 23(61.1%) were not satisfied with the dissemination of the policies on OVC. The stakeholders who were not satisfied with the dissemination of the policies suggested a number of ways by which the policies could be better disseminated. Nine (39.1%) stakeholders suggested that the government should have monitoring teams to check the efficiency and effectiveness of the dissemination methods (Table 3).

#### **Challenges with the implementation of the National policies on OVC in Benin-City**

##### ***The policy, laws, guidelines and strategic plans that have influenced the OVC response in Benin City***

The policies and law mentioned were the NGSP for OVC, the NAP for the OVC 2006-2010 and the Child Right Law (CRL). The CRL was more popular among those interviewed in the organizations as most of them could speak and discuss issues in it when compared with the other National policies mentioned. A strategic plan that has influenced the OVC response in Edo state is the Child Protection Network which was inaugurated by the current Governor of Edo State, His Excellency Adams Oshiomhole. It is said to be a structure at the community level that every community must have to protect the right of a child and provide care for the OVC.

One of the policy makers responded thus;

*'The Child Protection Network (CPN) was formed in Edo State in order to harness the activities of all the various sectorial caregivers. This network was set up in 2011. It was formally inaugurated by His Excellency Adams Oshiomhole. It has been set up too in other states. It is composed of Civil Society organizations, FBO, NGO, CBO and key members of the community (community leaders, youth leaders, women leaders, religious bodies, heads of schools and the legal department) all working in the state in the field of child protection'*



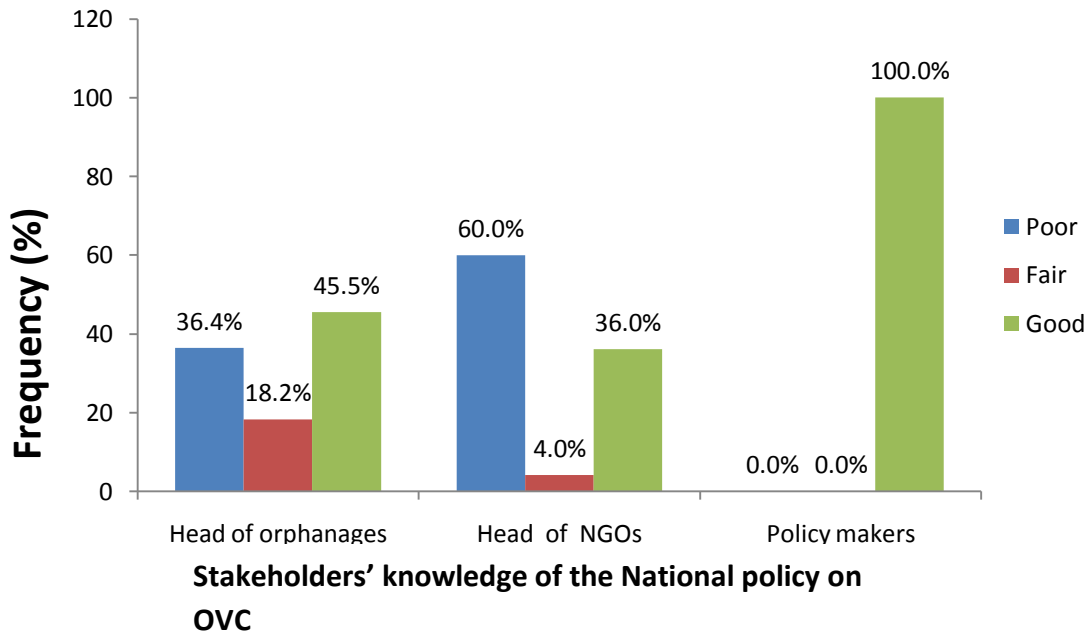


Figure 1. Knowledge of the National policies for OVC among the relevant stakeholders in Benin City.

Table 2: Stakeholders' sources of information of the National policies on OVC\*.

Sources of information	Frequency (%) n=33
Newspaper	3(9.1)
TV/Radio	3(9.1)
Seminars	31(93.9)
Internet	2(6.1)
Friend	2(6.1)
NGOs(USAID, Global Fund, FHI, IHVN and GHAIN)	4(12.1)

\*Multiple response. Note: n=33 because the data were obtained from the stakeholders with awareness of the existence of the policies.

**Prioritization of the situation of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in relation to other developmental challenges**

All the key informants attested to the fact that the situation of OVC in Edo state is not given the required priority when compared with the great burden posed by this group in the state. It was said that the issue of the vulnerable ones in Nigeria is still the least in rating of priority as this is reflected in the budget line of 2% for the OVC in the country. With daily increase in number of OVC, the budget line was said to be too small to meet their needs even if it is judiciously spent on them. Many of the organizations reiterated that there is lack of government support in the care and support of OVC and that it's only the Universal Basic Education of free education for all children (not only the vulnerable ones) that is made available to them. No other services from

the Minimum package of services and rights was said to be free for the OVC.

One of the heads of a faith based organization responded thus;

*'If our children do not have the basic things they need, who is going to use the roads we are building in another six years? The children we are building the roads for will be in prison by then. Development has to first of all capture the human beings who will use the resources that you are building. A development that is not human focused is not development.' There is no shelter in Edo State. We only have a juvenile centre where we have child criminals, street children and other vulnerable children all put together. How do we rehabilitate a street child when he is living with a child offender? We should go beyond scoring political points and face the real developmental issues.'*

**Table 3.** National policies on OVC mentioned by stakeholders and suggestive ways of effective dissemination.

	Frequency (%) n=33
<b>* Policies mentioned</b>	
National guideline and SOP for OVC	5 (15.2)
Child Right Act	19 (57.8)
National action plan for OVC	3 (9.1)
Non Response	10 (30.3%)
<b>Suggested ways of effective dissemination (n=23)</b>	
More sensitization of the public	3 (13.0)
Printing of abridged/summarized version in local languages	2 (8.7)
More regular meetings of stakeholders for distribution of the documents and to passing across of information	2 (8.7)
The government should have monitoring teams to check the efficiency and effectiveness of dissemination methods	9(39.1)
Law enforcement	2 (8.7)
Jingles, advert, campaigns and seminar	2 (8.7)
Involvement of National Orientation Agency (NOA)	1 (4.3)
Establishment of a family court	1 (4.3)

\*Multiple response. NB: n is 33 because data were obtained from stakeholders with awareness of the existence of the national policies.

### ***The strengths and weaknesses of the OVC response in Benin City***

**Strengths:** The strengths of the OVC response in Benin City was attributed by the key informants to the activities of some NGOs that have been working to alleviate the problems of OVC in the state though their effort is not sufficient to meet the huge burden. The Child Protection Network was also noted to be a strength of the OVC response and also that the donor agencies are bridging the gap.

The program officer of a community based organization said;

*'The NGOs have been able to do something but they are limited because of funding. They are therefore unable to reach the children who really need their services. I work in five LGAS and have about 2,000 children under my care, this number is so small though we are making significant progress but this doesn't address the needs of the children.'*

**Weaknesses:** So many weaknesses of the OVC response were mentioned by all the key informants among which are lack of adequate funds, defective monitoring of the activities of the OVC in the state by the Ministry of Women Affairs because of lack of logistic vehicle, no adequate budget line, shortage of staff, no computers made available in the offices and no data bank. Other weaknesses highlighted were lack of political will, corruption, lack of public enlightenment about the policies, ineffective dissemination of the policies, laws and guidelines, defective intersectoral collaboration, lack

of community participation, lack of proper coordination of all the activities by the Ministry. Over-dependency of the OVC on the support services was also mentioned as a weakness and lack of involvement of the private sectors like telecommunication companies and banks and lastly, worthy of note was also the lack of sustainability plans by most NGOs.

Two of the key informants; the program officers of one of the faith based organization and a non-governmental organization responded thus;

*'The African factor of over-dependency on the support services by the OVC is an issue, the children feel you have to provide them with everything and when you have even empowered them economically, they are still not contented. They keep coming back and they become over-dependent on the providers.'*

*'Another weakness is that many NGOs don't have sustainability plans. We have not received funding from any donor agency since last year March because the donor agencies have started withdrawing their services and they will completely actualise this in 2015 but we are still functioning. The only thing is that we have pegged the children we cater for to 1,500 from 3,200. We have a farm on which there is a poultry and we have a candle factory from which we get funds. That is why we can sustain ourselves despite the withdrawal of the funds.'*

*'Another key informant said "Ignorance of the people is one of the weaknesses with the OVC response. Illiteracy rate is high in Nigeria. How many people read newspaper every day? The radio stations have been censored in such a way that you hear only what they want you to hear. If the government want to work, they should*

*subsidize the price of newspaper to be selling at #20.00 for people to be able to have access to it. At least 50% of people will be reading the newspaper and by this Child Rights Law may be known to more people than what obtains now.'*

### **The government policies focusing on children's rights and addressing the care and support of OVC**

The key informants interviewed had the opinion that the CRL is all encompassing when placed side by side with other earlier laws relating to various issues on children's welfare. It was regarded as a composite law that handles all issues relating to all children not just the vulnerable children alone and also that it was well written but there was a clause of a limited number of citizens of Edo State having access to the law. A key informant also pointed out that the law didn't make provision for children over 18 years who have to exit the orphanage at this time.

One of the policy makers responded thus;

*'The Child Rights' Law was passed in Edo State in 2007 and gazetted in 2008. The law is an amendment of the Child Rights' Act and a fall out of United Nations Children Right and Convention of the children and welfare of children. The law is holistic and handles every issue relating to the total support of child survival, developmental stages of a child, protection of the rights of the less privileged and participation rights of a child. The Law gave birth to children parliament which is a part of their participatory right. The Child Rights' Law goes into each and every aspect of child's right.'*

### **How the new Children Rights' Law and the OVC guideline have been implemented in Edo State.**

The key informants had conflicting opinions in their responses to this question. About 45% of them had the opinion that the policies have in no way been implemented in Benin City, Edo State, 40% said one or two things have been implemented in the policies and very few things have not been implemented while the remaining 15% said all the contents in the law have been implemented.

The head of a faith based organization said:

*'No aspect of the policy has been implemented. Let's take examples from the policy, the policy says children should leave in families, but we still have orphanages all around, children are still hawking on the street during school hours, children are raped, the parents are ashamed to speak out for the fear of discrimination. I worked in one community where primary 1 and 2 pupils were put in a class, 3 and 4 were in one class and 5 and 6 were in one class, yet children have the right for their*

*education to be protected but this is not being implemented.'*

A program officer of a Non-governmental organisation said:

*'There is nothing that has not been implemented in the documents in Edo state especially in the area of child protection against sexual abuse and inheritance right. The question however is how many people know about the policies, how many know how to use it and how many know where to obtain it. Aside from the development workers, the Ministry should collaborate with National Orientation Agency to be able to educate the people on these policies. They might have been doing something in the past but this is not enough. There should be posters everywhere, jingles on the air and information on bill boards. The government is not doing well in that area. The Ministry should be the flag bearer of the Child Rights' Law. Let it sink into everybody both men and women because knowledge is the only thing that can change our attitude.'*

### **How the different levels of government and local community organisation can help strengthen implementation of OVC programs**

The key informants made different points on what the different levels of government can do to strengthen the implementation of the OVC program of which are that the Federal Government should be ready to commit our money into the care and support of the OVC programs and to become less dependent on donors should in case they withdraw their services. Another point made was that more sensitization should be carried out especially at the grass root level; officers in the Ministries should do away with personal idiosyncrasies in carrying out their duties; the bottle necks in the Ministry should also be addressed. Lastly, that the budget line though small should be properly targeted to the target population because if the 2% is judiciously used, there would indeed be significant impact on the lives of the children.

The head of a faith based organisation responded thus;

*'The capacity training we do every time should result in a change so that the old practice can be discarded. We go for trainings and we still keep doing what we have been doing because there is no adequate supervision and monitoring of our activities.'*

*'National bureau of statistics have no data for children which is to be used for planning. How can you plan for them when a lot of births are not registered? We can't also plan children hospital or plan their educational needs and have a standard program for children if there is no data and that is why we have 90,000 children looking for admission in two universities. In essence, more*

*researches should be carried out.'*

The key informants also advised that the local community organizations should intensify their effort in supporting OVC programming in Edo State. Sincerity and honesty of the local community organizations was also advocated.

A policy maker said;

*"The Local community organizations should be sincere in the sense that when they access the support services, they should send those materials accessed to the recipients. There are many NGOs that are actually Non-government individuals; this is because one individual parades himself as everything in the organization. The head of a faith based organisation also stated that "If we forget our pocket, and make noise together, we shall achieve"*

## DISCUSSION

A greater proportion of the heads of orphanages were nurses followed by the pastors, this is expected because the people in this occupation tend to provide humanitarian services. Nursing and pastoring are professions/occupation of loving and caring for people and this might have spurred the interest of the heads of orphanages in this profession in the establishment of the orphanages. This finding was also similar to the findings among caregivers in Ukraine where about 48% of the caregivers were nurses (Vashchenko et al., 2010).

Half (50%) of the major stakeholders for OVC lacked the knowledge of the national OVC policy. This finding is in consonant with the findings carried out among the stakeholders in Kenya and Botswana (Feranil et al., 2010; Pfliederer et al., 2010). This finding is similar because of inadequate dissemination of the policies among the stakeholders and the public and also that the OVC policies are not fully operationalized in Edo state. It is however not surprising that the 100% of the policy makers had good knowledge of the policy. This is because they are directly in charge and the custodian of the policies and so therefore have first-hand information on the contents of the policies. This was a similar finding to the findings in the study conducted in Botswana where only decision makers were conversant with the national policies on OVC of the country (Feranil et al., 2010). It is however not good enough for the contents of the OVC policies to be known by the policy makers alone; the major stakeholders on the field working directly with these OVC are expected to be kept abreast of the policies and it should also be ensured that it translates into improvement in the quality of service they render to the children. Interestingly, the Ministry constituted the greatest percentage (93.9%) of the source of information of the stakeholders. This translates to the fact that the Ministry is making effort to educate the other stakeholder's i.e. the heads of orphanages and support

institutions but perhaps the effort is not sufficient to ensure a good knowledge in majority of them.

The CRL was the most popular policy among the stakeholders; it was mentioned by a greater proportion of the respondent. This could be attributed to the fact that when the law was adopted and domesticated in Edo State in 2007, there was some form of public enlightenment to create awareness about it though the publicity seemed not to be enough and it probably was short lived. This was also the situation in the study conducted in Botswana (Feranil et al., 2010). The CRL is not a specific policy for the OVC but for all children. It is however surprising that the national OVC policies specific for these group of children were not known by the relevant stakeholders. These OVC policies though were introduced after the CRL into the state but not withstanding would have been known to the public and mostly the relevant stakeholders if the necessary publicity had been made to enlighten them about their existence. This fact can be further corroborated by the responses made by some of the key informants that the dissemination of the policies lacked the required publicity like jingles in the air, advertisement in the media and also the lack of involvement of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), which is an agency saddled with the responsibility of awareness creation of any government's policies, laws or strategies. Furthermore, a greater percentage (35%) of stakeholders suggested that the OVC policies could be effectively disseminated if the government can have a monitoring team to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of service. This suggestion also corroborates the finding from the key informant interview which reported that the monitoring of the OVC programming in Edo state is defective because of so many bottle necks and the bureaucracy of government. This finding is also in consonant with the findings from the study conducted in Botswana (Feranil et al., 2010).

The key informant interviews revealed that the issues related to orphans and vulnerable children are not being given the required priority despite the huge burden posed by this group. This is reflected in the small budget line for the OVC and also for the fact that there is no shelter for street children in Edo state as they are being housed together with child offenders. Children are an important component of any society or country but unfortunately they are vulnerable as they are completely dependent and they tend to be moulded whichever way they are shaped. If issues involving them are not critically handled, the resultant situation may be likened to a disaster that will inevitably occur. Political commitment and community participation are important principles required for the existence and sustainability of any programme but unfortunately in Edo state they were both highlighted as the challenges to the OVC programming. For any programme to be sustained and for the extended family system not to collapse completely, the community has to be made to own these OVC programmes. Interestingly, the community protection network is in existence already

in Edo state geared to ensure community participation. Though this new initiative is still at the infancy period and will naturally experience the normal teething problems but it should be nurtured very well so that it doesn't collapse like other programmes.

Over dependency on the OVC programmes was also stated by a key informant as a weakness of the OVC programming in Edo state. This may be due to the fact that many individuals are lazy to work and perpetually see themselves as dependents and incapable of earning a living by themselves. The current high rate of unemployment in Nigeria will further aggravate the situation. This development is however very dangerous as it will increase the dependency ratio of the country which will in turn reduce their productivity and invariably the socioeconomic status and on a long term affects the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country.

The findings of the key informant interviews were also similar to the findings in studies conducted in two of the African countries with similar socio-economic settings in Botswana and Kenya (Feranil et al., 2010; Pfleiderer et al., 2010; USAID, 2009). Summarily, it can therefore be said that lack of political commitment, high level of ignorance and poverty operating in these African countries of which Nigeria is a part might be responsible for the current state of OVC programming in Benin City, Edo state.

## Conclusion

There is a gap in knowledge of the National policy on OVC among the heads of orphanages and heads of support institutions, with just few of them knowing the National Guideline and Standard of Practice and National Action Plan for OVC as the National policies on OVC in Nigeria. Major challenges with the implementation of the national policies for the OVC were highlighted by the key informants. The challenges stated included lack of political commitments, lack of community participation, defective monitoring of the OVC programming, lack of finance, Inadequate trained manpower, lack of government support, very small budget line for the OVC, ignorance as there is no public enlightenment about the policies and so many others that synergistically contribute to the current situation of OVC programming in Benin City

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need for training and retraining of the heads of orphanages and heads of support institutions on the relevant policies on OVC, and intensifying policies propagation particularly the National Guideline and Standard of Practice and National Action Plan for OVC among the stake holders. National Orientation Agency should be co-opted into producing jingles and

announcement in the media in order to educate the public on the National OVC policies. The governments should be more committed to the OVC programme and more deliberate steps ought to be taken by them to ensure that programme models and resource flows match community needs and support the effective community-led responses already taking place. Community participation in the OVC programme should be encouraged, and they should also be involved in planning, designing and implementing initiatives in collaboration with the government and civil society organisations that are aimed at improving the social, economic, physical, emotional and psychological status of the OVC wellbeing. The budget line for the OVC by the policy makers should be reviewed upwards considering the huge cost required for their care and upkeep and the allocated funds for the OVC should be judiciously used only for their purpose and not diverted to other projects and lastly, effective monitoring of the OVC program is required to ensure successful implementation.

## Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

## REFERENCES

- Beelen N (2007). Exchange on HIV/AIDS, sexuality and gender. (newspaper online). (cited 2011 February,15) Available from <http://www.exchange-magazine.info>.
- Edo State Government (2005). Edo State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy Report. Edo, Nigeria. 2005 (cited 2011 March 21) Available from <http://www.ng.undp.org/seeds.shtml>.
- Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2007). National Guidelines and Standard of Practice on Orphans and Vulnerable Children. Abuja, Nigeria. <http://www.crin.org/docs/NigeriaOVCNationalGuidelinesHV.pdf> (Accessed on 3/21/2015).
- Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2008). The Key findings of 2008 situation assessment and analysis on orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Nigeria. Abuja, Nigeria 2008.
- Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development Nigeria (2006). OVC National Plan of Action 2006-2010 Abuja, Nigeria.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2007). Official Gazette: Legal Notice on Publication of the Details of the Breakdown of the National and State Provisional Totals, 2006 Census. Lagos, Nigeria.
- Feranil I, Herstad B, Jallow W, Mbuja Brown R (2010). Assessing the implementation of Botswana program for orphans and vulnerable children. Washington DC: Futures group, Health Policy Initiative, Task Order 1. [http://www.healthpolicyinitiative.com/Publications/Documents/1265\\_1\\_PIBA\\_Botswana\\_FINAL\\_acc.pdf](http://www.healthpolicyinitiative.com/Publications/Documents/1265_1_PIBA_Botswana_FINAL_acc.pdf) (Accessed on 22/3/2015)
- McKenna C (2010). Orphans and Orphanages. The Catholic Encyclopaedia. Available from <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11322b.htm>. Last accessed on 29/7/2015.
- Morantz G, Jody, Heymann J (2009). Life in the Institutional care: the voices of children in a residential facility in Botswana. *AIDS Care*; 22(1):10-16.
- National Population Commission and ICF Macro (2009). Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2008. Abuja, Nigeria, 2009. [http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/ng\\_publications\\_Nigeria\\_DHS\\_2008\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/ng_publications_Nigeria_DHS_2008_Final_Report.pdf). Last accessed on 29/7/2015.

- Pfleiderer R and Kantai O (2010). Orphans and Vulnerable children programming in global funds HIV/AIDS grants in Kenya. Washington DC: Future group, Health policy Initiative, Task Order 1.2010. [http://www.healthpolicyinitiative.com/Publications/Documents/1347\\_1\\_OVC\\_Global\\_Fund\\_Kenya\\_FINAL\\_Sept\\_2010\\_acc.pdf](http://www.healthpolicyinitiative.com/Publications/Documents/1347_1_OVC_Global_Fund_Kenya_FINAL_Sept_2010_acc.pdf). Last accessed on 29/7/2015.
- Smart R (2003). Policies for orphans and vulnerable children: A framework for moving ahead. Future Group International, Washington DC, USA.2003. [http://www.policyproject.com/pubs/generalreport/ovc\\_policies.pdf](http://www.policyproject.com/pubs/generalreport/ovc_policies.pdf). Last accessed on 29/7/2015.
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) & Policy Project (2004). A Rapid Assessment, Analysis and Action Planning Process (RAAAP) for Orphans and Vulnerable Children: Nigeria Country Report. New York, USA. 2004.
- UNAIDS and UNICEF (2006). Africa's Orphaned and Vulnerable Generations Affected by AIDS. 2006. pp. 1–52. [http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Africas\\_Orphaned\\_and\\_Vulnerable\\_Generations\\_Children\\_Affected\\_by\\_AIDS.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Africas_Orphaned_and_Vulnerable_Generations_Children_Affected_by_AIDS.pdf). Last accessed on 29/7/2015.
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2002). Orphans and other children affected by HIV/AIDS (Fact sheet). New York, USA. [http://www.unicef.org/aids/index\\_orphans.html](http://www.unicef.org/aids/index_orphans.html). Last accessed on 22/3/2015.
- United Nations Children's Fund, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and United States Agency for International Development (2004). Children on the Brink 2004. A joint report of new orphan estimates and a framework for action. 4<sup>th</sup>ed. New York, USA. [http://www.unicef.org/publications/cob\\_layout6-013.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/cob_layout6-013.pdf). Last accessed on 29/7/2015.
- United States Agency International Development (USAID) (2009). Kenya research situation analysis on orphans and other vulnerable children, country brief. Boston University Centre for Global Health and Development, OVC-CARE Project. 2009. <http://www.bu.edu/cghd/files/2009/12/Kenya-Research-Situation-Analysis-Country-Brief.pdf>. Last accessed on 29/7/2015.
- Vashchenko M, Easterbrooks A, Miller L (2010). Becoming their mother: Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Orphanage Personnel in Ukraine. *Infant Ment. Health J.* 31(5):570-590. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/imhj.20272/pdf>.



# International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology

## Related Journals Published by Academic Journals

- Journal of Economics and International Finance
- Journal of Hospitality Management and Tourism
- African Journal of Business Management
- Journal of Accounting and Taxation
- African Journal of Marketing Management
- International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology

**academicJournals**