



Increasing Gender Diversity in Institutions

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Introduction

- Institutions including universities operate by rules, norms and practices
- Rules may or may not be specific on gender but have gender effects
- Furthermore, those who work with rules have their biases
- Increasing gender diversity may require new rules as well as a gradual abandonment of archaic ones
- Multiple strategies are required to effectively address gender diversity in institutions



Examples - KNUST

- Established 1951 as University College for STEM training
- 55,000 students, <25% female; males dominant in all sectors
- 2016 – instituted affirmative action program i) to admit females into STEM programs and ii) for on-campus accommodation
- 2018 - first female Vice-President appointed
- Services - child care, paid maternity leave, anti-sexual harassment
- Informal networks exist on campus for women in science & engineering



Male dominance @ KNUST graduation



West African College of Surgeons

- Founded in 1961 for training, examination and certification of surgeons in sub-region
- 7,000+ surgeons trained - **no data on gender**
- **Two** females out of 29 Presidents since inception
- Limited female Chairpersons of the 7 Specialist faculties: Anesthesia, **Dental Surgery**, OBGYN, Ophthalmology, ENT, Radiology, **Surgery**.
- No family concessions for female residents
- **New strategic plan – targets more gender-sensitive policies; and more females in the College leadership**



African Forum for Research and Education in Health (AFREhealth)

- Interprofessional health organization founded in 2016.
- Emerged out of the MEPI initiative
- Constitution addresses gender balance of leadership
- Current President, Vice-President and Secretary are all female
- Ongoing monitoring of performance essential



Strategies for increasing diversity

- Standards setting – embedding equality in institutional structures i.e. mission, statutes, strategic plan etc.
- Admission/recruitment/promotion – affirmative action, quotas, targets, tenure, HR policy
- Supportive Services – child care, maternity and sick leave, financial support, protection against sexual harassment, incentives (accommodation, loans etc.)
- Diversity training – gender sensitive education across institution



Strategies for increasing diversity 2

- Mentorship & role models
- Leadership – representation on committees, boards etc., on-the-job training
- Monitoring and documentation of performance to ensure accountability



Conclusion

- Females make up 50% of society
- Their inclusion at all levels in institutions enriches the expertise, experience, growth and diversity of these institutions
- Gender-neutral or gender-insensitive attitudes and policies risk marginalizing women
- Special interventions backed by structural changes critical for levelling the playing field
- Budgetary allocation essential
- Monitoring by QA units for gender diversity ensures accountability





THANK YOU