

Conference Theme: Roots and Futures: Advancing the African Scholarly Imagination.

Conference Date: 30th-31st July, 2026

Venue: Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria (Hybrid)

Call for Panellists

Panel Title: *Reimagining Gender Knowledge in Africa: Decolonising Scholarship, Policy, and Practice*

Panel Description

For too long, gender scholarship in and on Africa has been shaped by conceptual frameworks, research methodologies, and policy prescriptions that originate outside the continent's diverse historical and lived realities. While feminist and gender studies have grown impressively across African universities, the field remains tethered to epistemological assumptions that often marginalise indigenous gender systems, local vocabularies of power and agency, and the complex, fluid realities of African masculinities, femininities, and non-binary identifications. Scholarships have witnessed successive waves of development discourse from Women in Development to Gender and Development to intersectionality. We contend that genuine transformation requires more than adding African cases to Western theories. It demands a fundamental reimagining of gender knowledge itself: what counts as evidence, who speaks, which histories matter, and how scholarship translates into policy and everyday practice. This panel, therefore, moves beyond the critique of colonial legacies to construct affirmative, decolonised approaches to gender research, pedagogy, and intervention. We are interested in contributions that centre African feminist epistemologies, whether from Yoruba, Akan, Igbo, Amhara, Kikuyu, or other knowledge traditions as robust theoretical resources, not merely as objects of study. We ask how governance, health, climate justice, rural livelihoods, religious institutions, and intergenerational care might be reconceptualised when gender analysis is rooted in African intellectual genealogies. And we insist that decolonisation must address the material and policy dimensions: how do we transform social protection, legal frameworks, health systems, and economic programmes to reflect gender justice on African terms? By bringing together scholars, practitioners, and policy researchers, this panel seeks to chart a forward-looking, actionable agenda for gender knowledge that is simultaneously rigorous, contextually grounded, and globally engaged.

Guiding Questions:

1. What would a genuinely decolonised gender studies curriculum, research agenda, and policy framework look like in contemporary Africa and what are the practical obstacles to achieving it?
2. How can African feminist epistemologies (pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial) challenge, complement, or displace dominant Western feminist theories in understanding gender, power, and agency?
3. In what ways do current governance structures, social policies, and legal regimes in African states perpetuate neocolonial gender norms, and how might they be reimagined from below?
4. How do intersecting crises climate change, public health emergencies, extractivism, and forced displacement demand new gender research methodologies that are participatory, Indigenous, and decolonial?
5. What are the ethical and political implications of applying Western-derived categories such as "LGBTQ+", "gender-based violence", or "empowerment" in African contexts, and how can scholars and practitioners negotiate translation, appropriation, and local innovation?

Suggested Thematic Categories:

1. African Feminist Epistemologies and the Decolonisation of Gender Knowledge
2. Gender, Governance and Transformative Social Policy
3. Gender, Health, and Bodily Autonomy
4. Gender, Climate Change, and Environmental Justice
5. Gender, Rural Livelihoods, and Agricultural Transformation
6. Gender-Based Violence, Rights, and Social Justice
7. Gender, Ageing, and Intergenerational Care
8. Gender, Work, and Economic Empowerment
9. Gender, Culture, Religion, and Social Transformation
10. Research
11. Methods and Praxis in African Studies

Submission Guidelines:

Abstracts of between 200 and 250 words, accompanied by a short bio of 100 words maximum, should be submitted via <https://ias-ife.com/ias-first-annual-hybrid-conference/>. Select "*Reimagining Gender Knowledge in Africa: Decolonising Scholarship, Policy, and Practice*" as your chosen panel session. Application must be submitted by 28 April, 2026. All abstracts should please include the name of author(s), title of proposed paper, institutional affiliation(s), and email address.

Panel Convener:

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