

femSTEP: Rural girls' and women's perspectives for engendering poverty reduction strategies by Dr. Myriam Gervais, IGSF

What is femSTEP?

femSTEP is an interdisciplinary research partnership between Canadian and African feminist scholars that enables senior and young researchers from diverse disciplines to converge around IGSF's research axis of equity and justice. The main area of study is the crucial role that rural women and girls could play in determining the success of poverty reduction strategies. Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and receiving complementary grants from IDRC and CIDA, this research programme focuses on innovative research techniques to bring forward rural women and girls' perspectives on poverty issues in Africa. femSTEP is led by researchers from McGill University (Drs. Gervais, Mitchell and Ubalijoro) and housed at IGSF.

Seeing and hearing rural girls and women in Rwanda

Using a feminist visual participatory methodology called photovoice, femSTEP aims to make transparent what has remained invisible in poverty analyses by providing evidence of rural girls' and women's own visions for fighting poverty. With photovoice the participants take photographs to explore and analyse the topic of research. The photos and the women's own analysis of their needs highlight the real gender differences in poverty and bring a broader understanding of the issues at hand.

femSTEP's research activities

Since its launch in 2009, femSTEP has developed and implemented a variety of hands-on training activities of the photovoice method with young Rwandan researchers, rural women and girls and university researchers and agronomic experts. Our first activity was an international seminar on participatory visual methodologies in Kigali, which brought together African and local Rwandan researchers and stakeholders (rural female leaders, the Rwandan Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion). Building on the success of this event, Drs. Myriam Gervais (IGSF), Claudia Mitchell (Education), Eliane Ubalijoro (ISID) provided specialized on-site training for the Rwanda Agriculture Board, the Gender Club of the Kigali Institute of Education and the National University of Rwanda.

Documentary video "I took this photo because..." Kigali, Rwanda

Because the project focuses specifically on gender realities and works within a cross-disciplinary approach, we believe it offers also a good training platform for graduate students and young scholars in Canada and Rwanda. A video demonstrating a photovoice training session with local Rwandan researchers is an example of the material we developed for our website. Produced by femSTEP, directed by femSTEP research assistant Lysanne Rivard and edited by Paul Neudorf, this instructional video titled "*I took this photo because...*" follows three young African scholars who are putting into practice for the first time the photovoice methodology. They meet and discuss with market women at the Kimironko market in Kigali. The women share their own perspectives on the daily challenges they face as market women.



Les documents produits par femSTEP sont également disponibles en français. Pour plus d'information sur femSTEP, contacter Myriam Gervais à l'adresse suivante: myriam.gervais@mcgill.ca