Title: Disparity in Development between Urban and Rural Females in Ghana, Senegal, and Liberia

Secondary archived data from the developing world shows that females who live away from urban centers are more likely to have less access to education and health and legal services than females in urban centers. Field research observations in rural areas in Ghana, Senegal, and Liberia punctuate the impact of this disparity as evinced by early marriages, high incidence of domestic violence, malnourishment, and abuse among rural women. This portion of the panel presentation will share key findings from food security research and emphasize the importance and approach for combining secondary data with in-country community-level observations to more clearly project real-world prevailing conditions that impact directly on equality, equity, and development of women. The research was conducted by the Conflict and Development Center at Texas A&M University in 2012 and 2013 with support from the Howard G. Buffet Foundation in three West African Countries. Secondary data, e.g., from Demographic and Health Surveys, shows that females in Accra in Ghana, Dakar in Senegal, and Monrovia in Liberia trend toward delaying marriage, having fewer children, and providing better education and nutrition to their children. Consequently, they have better social, political, and economic opportunities and advantages than women in rural areas. This trend is expected to continue. Conversely, field observations in food security research in the rural areas of these countries show that dependence on labor-intensive agriculture causes households to be in poverty, families to be malnourished, and women to suffer more from domestic violence, inordinate amount of farm work, poor or no education, and no access to information about contraception. Furthermore, social, economic, and educational infrastructure is lacking or nonexistent for them to make own decisions and improve their status. This trend is also expected to continue. Therefore, researchers must find ways to marry objective secondary data with subjective field observations to not only show disparity between the development of women in urban areas and rural areas and discover new areas for research but also to propose action-oriented efforts to alleviate prevailing conditions of women in rural areas.