

POLICY ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENT

Policy Issues and Development is a comprehensive collection of conceptual and empirical studies on theories of economic development in different vintages and policy related issues. Coverage of the collection varies from orthodox theories of economic development, sustainable development, pro-poor growth, development policies and role of non-government organizations in economic development. The book is specially focused on development experience of developing countries.

This book can be recommended for general readers interested about development experience of developing countries and also for professional researchers including postgraduate students interested in the issues covered in the book.

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Herath Madana Bandara

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Editor

HERATH MADANA BANDARA



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CHAPTER 1

POLICY ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENT: AN OVERVIEW

Herath Madana Bandara

Introduction

Policy issues related to development have undergone many changes with the changing views of development. From the 'Classical Model of Development' of Adam Smith and others to A.K. Sen's 'Capability Approach' many views on development policies such as Karl Marx's 'Communist Ideology', Keynesian 'General Theory', and so on and so forth have been held. In the second half of the 20th century, many theories or models such as balanced growth, unbalanced growth, the big push theory, the stage theory, etc. emerged for the purpose of analysing and resolving problems related to development in developing countries. Consequently, unprecedented progress could be seen in some parts of the developing world such as South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan, etc. Slow or no progress is seen in many developing countries as a whole or in some parts of those countries particularly in Asia, Africa and Latin America. However, mega cities where facilities are equal to or more sophisticated than New York or London came into view in these countries while remaining the rural areas at subsistence level. Within these mega cities, poor people in slums without basic needs are much greater in number than elites and the middle class. Thus, the gap between the rich and the poor seems to be widening. There are enormous problems and challenges still unsolved and to be addressed in order to keep all the people in the world to have equal opportunities. Though the theories of development and empirical research findings have been well documented, the attention on the investigations of policy issues in development are still needed. The main objective of this edition is, therefore, to understand the real policy issues and identify policy choices for developing countries.

As such, this edition is a collection of scholarly perspectives on development policy issues of different aspects encountered mainly in

CHAPTER 25

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: THE ROAD MAP TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

D.S. Adekaye

Introduction

Empowerment of people generally involves a process by which people take control of their lives and participate in decision that affects them by redressing power imbalances through the acquisition of skill, knowledge, confidence and the opportunity to claim and express their rights. According to Akanbi and Jekayinfa (2011), empowerment is thus the process of increasing the capacity of individual or group to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcome. Specifically, Batliwala (2007) opined that women empowerment entails transforming women economically, socially, psychologically, politically and legally.

The importance of women empowerment, to any country, cannot be over-emphasized; as the issue of empowering women has in no doubt become an integral part of contemporary topic of interest in the realm of development and democratization worldwide. For instance, the year 1975 through 1985 was declared by the United Nations as the "Decade for Women". The conferences held in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995 were all directed at discussing how to ensure good life for women. Also other issues like violence against women, women's right as human rights, women's reproductive health, unpaid activities, poverty etc. were discussed during such conferences. Consequently, women empowerment has become one of the central themes in global treaties, covenants and declarations principally due to the understanding that it is the catalyst to clear-cut development strategies which is targeted at poverty reduction, improved living standards, of good governance and profitable productivity (Ejumubo, 2013). Based on individual, national and

international recognition of the need for development, it is perhaps high time Nigerian and indeed Africa women were given more recognition by empowering them. This will in no small way aid the developing countries quest for rapid and sustainable development. This is more so as we recognize the demographic, social and economic importance of women in the Nigerian society.

According to Asogwa (1995), Nigerian as in other African countries, women constitute almost half of the country's population. Again, they are directly responsible for the production of approximately 60% of the food crops. They are involved in 90% of food processing; just as they are responsible for raising children and maintaining household. It is however shocking to observe that they do not get the kind of equity treatment they deserve. Oluwasola (1998:57) outlined some factors responsible for the perceived relegated position the Nigerian women have found themselves. These factors as identified by him include (i) Nigeria like other developing nations, is a male dominated country; (ii) gender role embedded in customs makes women to be subordinates to men and (iii) the failure of the society to attach some values to unpaid production activities often performed by women both domestically and at times family farms. It is therefore in the context of this relegated status of the African women using Nigeria as a point of reference, this paper examines women empowerment as a means to achieving sustainable and inclusive development in developing countries.

Conceptual Issues

Development as a concept is multidimensional as it means different things to different scholars. According to Ezeuwa (2014), development can be described as the use of human resources to quantitatively change man's physical and biological environment for his benefits or even seen as involving the introduction of new ideas into the social structures and causing alteration on the pattern of the organization or social structure. Olomola (1997), broadly defines development as an advancement through progressive changes in economic, social, cultural, technological and political conditions of a society leading to an improvement in the welfare of the citizen. He further posits that no society can be regarded as developed if there is high level of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, malnutrition,

child mortality, political instability and gender inequality. This means that development must not be judged merely by improvement in the institutions but also by the impact it makes on the people, especially as it relates to their choices, capabilities and freedom. Sustainable Development on the other hand refers to developments that meet the needs of present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need. According to United Nations Commission on environment and development in 1987, development is sustainable if it "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need". The implication of this is that there must be a balance of interest of present and future generation, so in order to achieve this sustainable development, women empowerment is a must for the country. The question one may then ask is what is empowerment? Empowerment is a multi-dimensional concept, according to Baily (1992), empowerment is a social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power for use in their own lives, their community by acting on issues they define as important. Kabeer & Huq (2014) also opined that empowerment is about changing power relations, not just about people gaining more confidence to be able to act on the world with more impact, but about recognizing that the inequalities of everyday lives are neither natural nor acceptable. They also expatiate that, empowerment enhance the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.

In relation to women, Kabeer & Huq posited that women empowerment included addressing a substantial body of policy concern with increasing women's access to resources and capacity to exercise control over their lives, and 'strategic life choices'. Many feminist theorist and perspectives have been developed in order to explain the importance and relevance of women to nation's development, some of these perspectives are discussed below.

Women and Development: A Theoretical Consideration

For a long time now, scholarly attention has been given to the issue of women in development. Some of the attentions have been directed to theoretical consideration on how women are perceived and the implication of this on their contributions to development in their respective societies. The theory focuses on the kind of discrimination suffered by women in the society as an impediment to a meaningful and of course sustainable development. Therefore, the liberal feminist theorists believed that sex discrimination that places men above women in the society is unjust because it deprives women of equal rights to pursue their own self-interest. Women as a group are not allowed the same freedoms or opportunities granted to men as a group. In a discriminatory situation, an individual woman does not receive the same consideration as an individual man. Whereas man is judged on his actual interests and abilities, a woman's interests and abilities are assumed to be limited in certain ways because of her sex. Liberal feminists believed that most discrimination against women is not mandated by legal systems but it is rather informal or based on customs. Liberal feminists believe that justice requires equal opportunities and equal consideration for every individual regardless of sex, particularly if all, regardless of sex, must contribute to human development. However, the Liberal feminism has been criticized of focusing on getting ahead rather than ending oppressions of all women. This has influenced the thinking of academics and activities of primarily the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on the need to create alternative social institutions separate from men, within which women can fulfill their needs. This interest led to the emergence of Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD) approaches.

The Women and Development paradigm stresses the distinctiveness of women's knowledge, work, goals and responsibility. It argues for recognition of this distinctiveness and for acknowledgement of the special role that women have always played in development process. For instance, the WAD perspectives gave rise to a persistent call to recognize that women are the main stay of agricultural production in many areas of Africa, although their contribution has been systematically overlooked and marginalized in national and donor development plan. According to Parpart (1989), WAD argued for a development approach that recognized the danger of integrating

women into a patriarchal world, then sought instead to create women only project, carefully constructed to protect women interest from patriarchal domination.

The WAD approach remained particularly strong as women continue to organize at the grass-root level and through broader networks to increase recognition and support for women's special contribution to national development. The major problem with WAD approach is that marginalization and smallness of scale have limited the transformative potential of women only organizations.

Gender and development (GAD) emerged in the early 1980's and the approach tried to correct the one sided approach of WAD by arguing that sustainable development is only possible if women and men are equally involved and that equality of women is not just women's issue, it is a goal that requires the active participation of both men and women. The GAD is a strength based approach, identifying and building on existing opportunities, knowledge, collaborative activities, networks, resources, economic and social capitals that communities including women already possess (Sen & Grown, 1987). GAD recognizes the different impact of development policies and practices on women and men, and sees women as agents, not simply as recipients of development. This perspective thus call into question both gender relations and development process. The politicization of practical needs and their transformation into strategic interest constitutes central aspect of GAD approach, as does the empowerment of women to achieve their goal. GAD approach provides a way to analyse policies and organization effort to determine which one will both meet short-term practical needs and help to change the structure of subordination.

Women and Economy of Developing Countries

The Nigerian women like their counterparts in other less developed countries have proved to be more than a mere bench warming spectator even in the midst of the male dominated congregation (Gusim, 2012). Women have shown that they are competent not at handling home affairs alone but other spheres of the society. Their prominent rise in professions like law, medicines and accounting is a strong indication of their indispensability to the society. According to Arene (1993), this feat, apart from testifying

to the resilience, determination and unyielding spirit of women, cast in bold relief two useful and challenging facts. First, the leadership trait is not genetically acquired and is not gender related. If given the chance, women can also participate in policy making effectively. Second, man admires and respect women who wield power whether it is economic or political. This fact negates the myth that successful women are abhorred and constitute a threat to the society, especially their husbands.

According to Glassey (2014), Nigeria's female population is a powerful hidden engine for economic growth, destined to take to new heights, West Africa's thriving global economy. They have been able to narrow the large gender gap in employment and Nigeria is already affirming its reputation as a driver for independent economic development within the continent. Glassey in his article observed that at least five banks in Nigeria now boast of female Chief Executive Officers and the Central Bank of Nigeria has also launched efforts to establish a special fund to provide assistance to female entrepreneurs. In the political realm, Glassy also submitted that the Nigerian women now account almost one third of the country's cabinet. The implication of this is that gender stereotype that hitherto characterized the Nigerian politics is fast disappearing. In spite of these changes that have occurred in the both political and economic fortunes of the Nigerian women, literature on Nigerian National Development has not given commensurate attention to the contributions of Nigerian women to the National Development (Mazrui, 1991).

A Historical Survey of Women Participation in Development

Awareness on the indispensability of women in National Development in Nigeria and other Africa countries gained momentum in the latter half of the 1980s (Arene, 1993). This was later solidified in 1995 after the country's women participation in the International Conference on Women in Beijing, China. But despite all these efforts, it will not be wrong to say that the role or importance of women in development has not been adequately appreciated. According to Attoe (2007), the Nigerian experience like other less developed countries can be highlighted in three periods namely, the precolonial, colonial and post colonial periods. In the pre-colonial period, women's contributions during this period which according to Attoe (2007)

were more pronounced in the aspect of kin- group sustenance. (Lasiele, 1999) in a much earlier work observed that women in precolonial period contributed immensely to the production and distribution of goods and services, though at subsistence level. They farmed alongside their children and husbands. Essentially, during this historical period, women took part in production of palm oil and palm kernel particularly in the Eastern Nigeria just as they were known for their participation in long distance and local trade across the country and beyond.

Another major area in which the women had contributed to development was in the area of food processing such as fishdrying, *garri* processing, salt processing etc. These among others were the common trades among the women of *Okposi*, *Uburu* and *Yala* in Nigeria.

Women also played prominent role spiritually. That is why today we have some immortal females like *Oya* and *Osun* in Nigeria and *Paththini* and *Kali* in South Asia etc. that are portrayed as river goddesses, earth goddesses and fertility goddesses (Attoe, 2007). Women were also active in music, songs and dances required during religious activities.

Education was essential for women during the precolonial period as it gives women the chance to acquire needed skills to sustain themselves. Okereke (2010) submitted that "a woman who was without a craft or trade, or who was totally dependent on her husband, was not only rare, but was regarded with contempt". According to Agu (2007), women during this period were actively part of the political set up of their communities though their responsibilities were mostly complementary. Agu illustrated this claim with the pre-colonial Bornu women who were actively involved in the administration by holding very important offices in the royal family, including the offices of the *Megira* (the Queen mother) and the *Gumsu* (the first wife of the Mai or King). Contributions of women like Queen Amina of Zaria, *Moremi* of Ife, *OmuOkwel* of *Ossomari* and many *Iyalodes* in the Yoruba land to political development and township administrations during the precolonial era cannot be disputed.

In the colonial period, there was concentration of efforts on exportation as a result of which the prestige of the traditional occupation of women was greatly undermined. Thus, the smaller markets that were formerly

operated by women gradually disintegrated as a result of the emergence of foreign companies such as John Holt, United African Company (U.A.C.), Lever Brothers (Now Unilever) etc. Women were not given opportunity to obtain both medium and largescale loans which were important in operating at the bulk purchase level of the colonial economy. In agricultural sector however, cash crop incentives, technology and innovations were restricted to men (Curtin, 1964). According to Asogwa (1995), Colonial policies and statutes were therefore clearly sexist and biased against women. During this historical epoch, the Nigerian women were disfranchised as very few of them were given political or administrative appointments. For instance, it was not until the 1950s that three women were included in the House of Chiefs (Glassey, 2014).

The critical situation of the Nigerian women during the last two historical periods improved somewhat during the post-colonial period. This period is characterized by active participation of Nigerian women in various aspects of the Nation's development and traditional agricultural sector. The ever increasing burden of food production has shifted to the women because Nigerian men now prefer to take up wage labour. Thus, according to Asogwa (1995), the Nigerian women now contribute between 50% and 70% of Nigeria's food requirements. However, the situation in the public sector remained way off satisfactory; it is interesting to note that it is obviously different from what was obtained during the precolonial and colonial times. For example, in 1965, only 6.9% of the salaried workforce was women while by 1970, 8.7% of the total number of established staff in the Federal Civil Service was made up of women. Similarly in 1980 the figure had risen to 12.6% and the same trends were maintained in State Civil Services (Basse and Toyo, 2003). In another work by Okereke (2010), women in 1979, were said to constitute 4.9% of agricultural manpower in Nigeria, 1.4% of artisans and craftsmen, and 1.6% of the professional/sub-professional group. It was only in the medical sector that women constituted 84.3% of dieticians and 80.2% of nurses.

The position of women in education in post-colonial Nigeria has not improved much because there is a gap between male and female education enrolment and attainment. According to the Population Reference Bureau (1981), only 6% of adult Nigerian women were literate; by 1979, 72.9% of

urban girls and 80.08% of rural girls had no access to formal education. This trend also reflected in university admission. Based on the perception that women need not be educated because they are meant to be home keepers and "baby making machines" is really affecting their chances of being liberated. Another factor which is affecting women's education is the not too buoyant economic condition of the country. This factor forces parents to withdraw their children from school due to the relatively high cost of school fees. Thus, parents, especially rural dwellers, prefer to educate male children over female. Many State governments have made efforts to alleviate this by granting free education to children, both males and female, up to certain levels.

The role of women in Nigeria's post 1960 politics has not been reflected sufficiently, in terms of appointments to policy making posts. In spite of massive support given to various political parties by women, women organizations, market women movements etc., until recently, very few women benefited from political patronage. This situation however changed slightly in the fourth republic when women in politics seem to be making more progress in their quest for recognition even though they hardly win elections. For instance, few women were elected into the House of Assemblies while some emerged as Chairpersons of Local Governments, many Councilors as well as a Deputy Governor in Lagos State. They also got appointments as Commissioners, Senators, Special Advisers and Ministers. From the above, it is obvious that women have not really been part of Nigerian political terrain despite efforts made by women nationalists of the colonial era. They are still marginalized in major sectors of the country. The Nigeria experience is a replica of what obtains in most less developed countries. At this juncture attempt will be made to examine some of the non-governmental programmes initiated by most First Ladies in Africa and other less developed countries using Nigerian and Ghana as an example.

Women Empowerment Programmes in Nigeria and Ghana

Better Life for Rural Women

Women empowerment programmes in Nigeria have always been mostly initiated by First Ladies and in response to the UN declaration of 1975 – 1985 as the "Decade for Women", The erstwhile First Lady

of Nigeria Mrs. Maryam Babangida initiated Better Life Programme in 1987 and initiated the establishment of National Commission for Women (Arum 2007). This marked the beginning of such programmes in Nigeria and subsequent governments have done the same by initiating programmes aiming at women empowerment, children emancipation and poverty alleviation. The Better Life programme was aimed at empowering women in rural areas economically, socially and politically. The programme record some achievement, according to Babalola (2009), the better life rural women programme facilitated the establishment of 9,492 cooperatives societies, 1, 435 cottage industries, 1,784 new farms and garden, 495 new shops and market, 1,094 multi-purpose women centres and 135 fish and livestock farms. The programme was able to raise awareness and mobilize women towards self- emancipation.

Family Support Programme (FSP)

The family support programme was launched in 1995 by Maryam Sanni Abacha. According to Lawal and Abide (2002), the programme was introduced to sustain family cohesion and emancipate women from all forms of exploitation and domination by their male counterparts. Like her predecessor, she encourages women to join politics which boosted the number of women that contested the 1998 election. Maryam Abacha influences the upgrade of the National commission for women into a full-fledged Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development. She launched family support Trust Fund and through the money realized built the National Women and Children Hospital, Abuja.

Women Right Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA)

Women right advancement and protection alternative is a non-governmental organization initiated by Mrs. Lami Fati Abubakar the First lady between 1998 and 1999, for the promotion and enforcement of all rights of women, the elimination of all forms of repugnant practices and violence against women and enhancement of their living standards. It also focus on the Legal Rights of women regardless of color, creed or social status and rendered services to women to ensure the set objectives are met (WRAPA Newsletter Oct–Dec 2002). The foundation, to some degree, was able to actualize her aims by empowering Nigerian women through

women enlightenment with respect to their legal rights, provision of free legal services and training of women in vocational skills (Arum, 2010). Four hundred and ninety four (494) cases of abuse of women rights were successfully handled between 2004 and 2006. Through the programme, grants were secured to carry out a number of activities such as women political participation, legislative advocating for enactment and reform of discriminatory laws, women empowerment through skill acquisition and literacy. (*WRAPA Newsletter Jan – July 2006*). Because of its proper incorporation as an NGO the programme has continue to provide legal and counselling service in 24 state out of the 36 states that make up Nigeria.

Child Care Trust (CCT)

Child Care Trust was initiated by Mrs. Stella Obasanjo in 1999. The major goal of the Trust was to eradicate poverty, unemployment, nutrition, health and education issues as they may affect children (Arum, 2010). The organization has been successful in its quest by improving people's lives by granting of scholarships, offering of medical services and provision of accommodation. Mrs. Obasanjo also did well by encouraging Nigerian women to participation in governance and politics (Arum, 2010). According to *The Vanguard News Paper* of October 5th, 2004, she was reported to have said that though the President intended to improve standard of living in Nigeria, things are not likely to improve unless women were given more opportunities to participate in governance (*The Vanguard, October 5th, 2004*). Hence, the President was encouraged by her to incorporate more women into his government.

Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF)

Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) was launched in 1999 by Mrs Titi Abubakar the wife of the vice president Atiku Abubakar of the federal republic of Nigeria. WOTCLEF is dedicated to the eradication of trafficking in persons, child labour, and violent abuses of the right of women as well as eradication of HIV/AIDs. Its activities have not been restricted to Nigeria, but also led awareness campaigns in a number of European countries that receives young women

and children trafficked in Nigeria. In terms of achievement, WOTCLEF offers assistance to young women, boys and girls who are victims of trafficking and child labour by ensuring that they are economically self-sufficient and psychologically well adjusted. A significant contribution of WOTCLEF was the sponsoring of a bill that led to the enactment of the trafficking in persons (prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act of 2003 and the subsequent establishment of National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). One of the gains of its international collaboration was the special consultative status granted to WOTCLEF in July 2003 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSCO) to maintain regular presence at United Nations meeting and conferences that relate to WOTCLEF programmes and activities (retrieved <http://www.wotclef.net/w/>).

Women and Youth Empowerment (WAYE)

Mrs. Turai Yar Adua also initiated programs to empower Nigerian women. She was interested more in issues relating to Public Health and enhancement of the welfare of the disadvantaged and in order to realize this, she signed a memorandum of understanding with MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston Texas (*Daily Triumph August 28, 2008*). This was aimed at assisting Nigerian women with cancer. Integrated Maternal, New born and Child Health (IMNCH) were also initiated by the Federal Government in order to realize some aspects of the millennium development goals (Arum, 2010). The First Lady, in her quest to enhancing and promoting the living conditions of Nigerian Women and Children, also launched a programme called "Women and Youth Empowerment Foundation" (*Vanguard 17 February, 2009*). Then she followed this up by directing wives of State Governors to dedicate most of their projects towards issues relating to poverty alleviation, Women education as well as empowerment of rural women. This move proved so successful that almost all the states in the country had programmes geared toward improving lives of women and children. But as always, continuity has always been a problem. That is, programmes are often abandoned immediately a new administration is ushered in. By and large, Nigerian government has done quite well in the aspect of Women empowerment but perhaps their best is not good enough.

Women for Change Initiative (WFCI)

Between 2010 and 2015, the first lady Dame Patience Jonathan launch and implement programmes under a 'pet project' named women for change initiative. She sought to make life better for women in the country and totally restore the dignity of womanhood. She was an Apostle of the actualization of the 35 percent affirmative action for women in Nigeria, thus advocating more women in governance. She struggled relentlessly to awaken and empower the Nigerian women through her various submits, programmes, enlightenment and sensitization campaigns including ensuring that women in politics are constitutionally recognized as stakeholders. She canvassed in several fora that women should be given more opportunities to contribute to the development of the country. It is also to her credit that women were effectively mobilizes for the last general election in Nigeria and ensuring that President Goodluck Jonathan affirmed and delivered on the promise of 35 percent affirmative action for women in his administration. (Boss Africa Magazine, 2015) Apart from the first ladies, there are other efforts by other bodies to improve the lot of women; these include National policy on Women which aims at promoting and protecting the rights of women as well as increasing their participation in governance; The National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) also expresses government's commitment to 30% representation for women and the Federal Government is trying to keep to that policy (Ovute, Dibia & Obasi, 2015).

31ST December Women's Movement

The 31st December Women's movement was founded by Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings with the main goal of mobilizing women, particularly the disadvantage and vulnerable in both rural and urban areas. The movement wanted women to understand the governance of the country and to be part of the participatory democratic system. The programme supported and promoted activities that would empower women through education, management of their profit, capacity building which enabled women to develop a new sense of culture and attitude to take charge of their life and be part of governance from the village to the national level. As part of the achievement of the organization, the 31st December Women's Movement spearheaded the advocacy and got the intestate succession Law

passed PNDC Law 111 in 1985 and the marriage and divorce registration Law PNDC Law 112 which benefitted all Ghanaian women (retrieved Mobile.ghanaweb.com/.../artikel.php?.id).

Appraisal of the Empowerment Programmes

All the above enumerated programmes as examples of various empowerment programmes in less developed countries have impacted on the life of many women. According to Ojo (2013), the various 'pet project' of the first ladies at both state and national levels revealed intervention in six major areas, economic empowerment, educational empowerment, skill acquisition, political empowerment, health and social welfare and justices for the women. In spite of these efforts, a number of criticisms have trailed all the pet projects of the First Ladies, these include the lack of continuity, wasteful spending, lack of accountability and transparency in spending public fund and above all not reaching the actual women that needs the empowerment, especially the rural women. This assertion was corroborated by Alabi & Jekayinfa (2011) who commented on Better Life for Rural Women that "the targeted beneficiary-rural women and children- were side tracked and the programme was hijacked by the elite and custodians who use the avenue to display wealth through extravagant expenditure and show-off of expensive dresses".

The above enumerated problems have not real allow women the full benefit of the empowerment programmes, so the level of poverty is still very high especially among women which are due largely to a number of factors such as political discrimination, economic barriers, religious impediments, family responsibilities and child bearing and lack of education. The country may not be able to achieve sustainable development without addressing some these factors.

Women Empowerment for Sustainable Development: Way Forward

In promoting women empowerment in all developing countries every sector must support women in all ramifications. To this end the paper propose the following recommendations:

First, all the arms of government in the less developed countries should improve girls' enrolment in order to ensure gender balance in education. Educational curricular should be designed in a way that it will not

be gender biased; this can be intensified through restructuring of academic curricular. According to Ovute, Dibia&Obasi (2015), access to quality education has been used as the major yardstick for social, political and economic inclusion. This is in line with the Affirmative Action that requires about 30 percent of women to be elected to political positions in African countries. The government should also promulgate necessary laws that will eradicate all forms of prejudices and discriminations against women.

Second, Non-Governmental Organizations should create proper awareness, centered on the need for women empowerment, their relevance and importance to the society. They also need to provide means for empowering the women especially the rural women. There are evidences that some of the NGO's launched by the First Ladies have impacted one way or the other on the women but they are usually truncated immediately their progenitors' husband is no longer in power, therefore, it is recommended that the NGO's should always be incorporated to ensure the continuity of such empowerment programmes.

Third, a major way by which women empowerment could be actualized is through acquisition of vocational skills education. "The right of women to be self-reliant and self-employed can be achieved through the acquisition of vocational skills that are related to their environment" (Ovute, Dibia & Obasi, 2015). This will empower them to participate more in small scale enterprises, which, incidentally, is very important when trying to eradicate poverty and unemployment among the women folks and consequently they will be come productive enough to aid the country's quest for national development, this can be achieved through public private partnership.

Fourth, social organizations like women solidarity associations and cooperative associations should be encouraged. Through this, they will be able to fight for their rights and get what they deserve in the society. Again, through forming of associations, they are bound to get more recognition from the government.

Fifth, at the individual level, parents should try to bring their female children up, instilling in them the culture of self-reliance, self-worth and equality with their male counterpart.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is quite obvious that importance of women to any nation's development cannot be over emphasized. Many beliefs concerning the fact that women cannot lead or that women are unproductive apart from catering for home affairs and as "baby machines" have been found to be untrue and lack substance. Hence, women should be adequately empowered if any meaningful development is to be made in Nigeria. In order to empower women, certain steps like restructuring of academic curricular to reflect gender parity; creation of awareness on the need to empower women; acquisition of vocational skills by women; correction of untrue prejudices and more should be taken.

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