

WOMEN ENGAGEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION PROCESS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: This paper on women engagement in development intervention process in Nigeria has the following objectives; to determine the need for empowering women to participate actively in the development of the nation and to determine their engagement and intervention role in the development process of the country. The study employed secondary source of methodology and contends that the girl child and women engagement and intervention process of development in any nation is inevitable. Findings reveal that women empowerment is necessary in the areas of unhindered access to quality education, socio-economic and political participation, and support for leadership positions, cultural transformation, and healthy living amongst others. It is discovered that inclusion of women in development activities will reduce inequality, enhance sustainable development when they are involved in policy design, plan, implementation, execution, and evaluation. It will equally reduce gender inequality and apathy. As critical stakeholders in a nation, women intervention in development process will propel economic growth, stability in policies, social transformation, and reduction in cultural and religious fanatics. Therefore the study concludes that for development to occur in any nation, women who constitute high population and vibrant should be in the nation's development plans.

Introduction

A critical study shows that women constitute a very high percentage of any country's population. Despite their numerical strength, countries tend to neglect them in developmental processes. Adirika (2013) citing Jeminiwa is of the view that women by their psychological, physiological and intellectual make-up perform more than complimentary roles in the production and development processes, yet their contributions had been down played, neglected or not recognized at all. National Population Commission (2015) projected that Nigeria has a population of about ninety million, nine hundred and eighty nine thousand, two hundred and four people who fall within women bracket. This group of people (women) is a special group with strong stamina and passion emanating from their general characteristics which include zealotness in development, curiosity towards change, hardworking, ego, and impatience for change among others. Women that can foster change and

development should be of substance, power, and of positive standing and meaning. Wikipedia sees women as adult female humans. Adulthood therefore is associated with social and legal concepts. Social adults are responsible, self-sufficient and mature to function in a society for development. A legal adult on the other hand is one who has attained the age of maturity in contrast to minor. As matured beings, women can foster development because of their power, positive thinking, commitment to change and their forthrightness.

Accordingly, Hossian (2010) believes that women in any nation or society are the most viable and potential human resources not only in population structure but also in social development of a country. Therefore, it is utmost paramount that the prospect for women engagement and empowerment for development must be all inclusive but not limited in the reduction rate of employment, stability in government policies, installation of effective, efficient and result oriented economic team, profitable negotiation,

and improvement of basic infrastructure. Nevertheless, women economic participation, engagement and empowerment programmes thrive in positive sustainable developmental setting, and these promote women competence, confidence and connection (Kelvin-Iloafu, Igwe and Enemuo, 2019). In these circumstances, women should be engaged in development processes that will uplift their economic status and have a variety of benefits for a nation.

Development is not a largess or a gift from an individual or a philanthropic person to the society or nation. It involves the systematic inclusion of citizens equipped with scientific and technical knowledge to meet specific objectives or requirements. Development is directed towards adding improvements to material lives and the society. A nation is made up of youths, women and men and development could not be possible without the active involvement, engagement and participation of all the citizens of the society. It is a deceit to believe that development could occur in a society without active engagement of the youths and women who form the large number of citizens and reside in the country (Emeh, Eluwa and Uka 2012).

Todara and Smith (2006) see development as a multidimensional process which involves the sustained elevation of the entire society and social system towards a better or humane life. In order not to compromise the future generation which mainly consists higher percentage of the women, Obeta and Charity (2012) opt that substantial engagement, participation and sustained interest could only be achieved through development efforts of the women and in direct consonance with the people's social, cultural and religious values devoid of gender inequality and bias.

Therefore it becomes imperative that for a genuine development to occur, women of the society must be involved either to enhance development or to sustain it. Inclusiveness becomes critical in a country that dreams of development. It is the utmost nature to improve development that Emeh et al (2012) consider people's engagement and participation to be critical in achieving the objectives of development as they believe that it is a pretense to think that the crises in the developing countries can be overcome or that the reshaping of societies and the development of its rural areas can be undertaken without active participation and engagement

of the people, particularly the large number (women) of the citizens. The emphasis therefore, among other things is that participation and engagement by individual beneficiaries (men and women) is an indispensable feature of all forms of development.

Concept of Development

Development has different meaning to different professionals such like economist, political scientists, educationists, and adult education practitioners. In fact many scholars are of the view that development is primarily used by social scientists. This is because development is seen as per capital income of a person or the Gross National Product. However development connotes a change and growth in the status quo, whether of physical development in a person, a plot of land, economic development of a society or a nation.

Amirize (2005) postulates development as "any conscious efforts made or designed by individuals, organizations, or state authorities to facilitate the gradual growth, advancement and improved wellbeing of man and society". He believes that development could be initiated by individuals, organizations or even state authorities, but, however tailored towards the upliftment of man and society. The emphasis of development should be on the people because it is they who are taught to appreciate what constitute change (Balogun, 2002). While Nyerere (1978) asserts that "development is for man, by man and of man". This assertion stipulates that development could not take place without active engagement and participation of man who stands as all-inclusive (women) human beings.

Ahmed (2007) emphasizes that development has to do with improving the living condition of people. He further highlighted some developmental indicators such like; high quality of life, higher income, better education, higher standards of health and nutrition, less poverty in society, a cleaner environment, more equal opportunities, greater individual freedom and richer cultural life amongst citizens of a nation. Therefore the whole essence of education in this regard either for children or adults is to develop human beings (Osuji, 1988). Ekpenyong and Uba (2019) noted that development could be recorded as the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced, stronger, qualitative, sustainable, and lasting.

Nyerere (2006) states that development is the expansion of man's (woman) own consciousness and therefore of his

own power over himself, his environment and his society. Seya (2014) believes that investment in the development of human capital through education and most especially adult education is crucial for developing a labour force and managerial know-how able to compete in today's global economy. Development can only be made possible if it is human-centred process and this can only be achieved through adult education programmes which are designed to bring the best out of adults.

Empowerment of Women for Development

Empowerment could be seen as the manifestation of power redistribution which challenges patriarchal ideology and man dominance. It is the transformation of the structure or institutions that are in force and perpetuate discrimination between the sexes. In this instance it is a process to enable women to access materials as well as information resources, and to have control so as to participate and engage actively in the development of the society.

Hossain (2010) asserts that women in a community or society are the most viable, resourceful and potential human resources not only in population structure but also in social and empowering women are powerful and development sustained. However, Akpan (2016a) believes that empowerment starts from the correct identification of the causes of poverty, deprivation, impoverishment or marginalization, followed by planned programme of actions on how to overcome the problem and realize growth, the execution of such action plan, monitoring and evaluating the process for success and improvement. Empowerment is better conceptualized as a process of activities that will cultivate in breaking the bond of poverty circle and set in motion the virtuous circle of businesses that support wealth creation and perpetual prosperity (Akpan 2016a). Poverty alleviation policies are a form of empowerment programme, but there are some other measures for empowerment. These include a cultural transformation that offers more opportunities for the accumulation of human capital through access to education and health facilities (Akpan 2015). Education will create in women the sense of gaining control, a sense of participating and engaging, and a sense of making decisions and evaluating the process.

Olinga and Lubyayi (2002) are of the opinion that educated people can analyze situations, define strategies, draw up programmes of action and opt for a better deal on

any socio-economic and indeed political and developmental matters. Therefore, conscientize women about their civic rights support them for leadership positions; inform them about the need to partake in community election amongst others. In justifying the above, Kelvin-Iloafu, et al. (2019) believe that the potential for women empowerment is not only in the reduction on unemployment, stable government policies, amongst others. Women economic empowerment programmes thrive in positive developmental setting, and these promote women competence, confidence and connection. They further postulate that investing in women education require equipping women with the requisite knowledge and skills required for their survival through remarkable ingenuity that helps them to establish themselves as income earners and employers of labour in their community and the society at large.

The World Bank (2014) posits empowerment as a process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and transferring those choices into desired actions and outcomes. In the light of the actions and outcomes, Edrain, Tibon, Victoria and Tugas (2015) assert that women engagement and empowerment are aimed at creating healthier and higher quality of life for underprivileged or at risk youths and women. Empowerment becomes a process of strengthening an existing situation, meaning that such a situation already exist that needs additional strengthening. It involves the provision of enabling environment for productive and intellectual abilities to be realized. Empowerment is a multidimensional social process that fosters not just power in people, but the implementation of this power for use in their own lives, their community or society and in their nation for developmental activities (Adrain et. al., 2015). This is why women education is imperative because good education will provide means for escape from poverty, disease, ignorant, superstition, increase self-esteem and could provide the means for getting job or self-employment which enhances contribution to development.

Women Engagement in Development Process

The concept of engagement or participation is conceived by Cohen and Uphost (1988) to mean the involvement of a significant number of persons in situation or action which enhance their wellbeing. Torutein (2010) posited participation as the active process in which a people in

question takes part in the initiative and implementation of decision. Accordingly, Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) insist that engagement or participation is the ability of individuals; old or young, rich or poor, (youths or women), to have an impute into the decision making process and play a vital role in improving the quality of life in the society. Consequently, sustainable development in any nation without active participation and engagement of women who constitute high percentage of human resources and workforce in the society is a mirage. This is not only due to their numerical strength but also their agility, commitment and forthrightness towards project completion and protection in the society.

Women are important stakeholder groups for achieving an all-inclusive development in any society. Women are visionaries when given the chance, in fact, women shape programmes in response to the needs they experience first-hand and or see amongst their folks. That is why Adirika (2013) believes that the wheel of development of any nation lies on the shoulders of their women because they provide the labour force for production of goods and services and their mass strength makes their action or inaction critical in development. Onyekpe (2007) states that women occupy a prominent place in any society. As home managers, they are within the middle-aged; the average aged and has energy and ideas that are nation's great potentials. Therefore their developmental engagement cannot be underrated. They are therefore the engine and catalyst of national development.

In any developmental processes, women are veritable organ that could not be toyed with by any society that aims to develop. Their full engagement is essential to achieve people-centred and integrated sustainable development of a nation. In many developing countries, women are the heart of development because they control most of the non-monetary economy such as subsistence agriculture, child bearing, and domestic labour, amongst others. They also play important roles in the monetary economy as traders, wage earners, employers of labour and recently entrepreneur (Kelvin-Iloafu, et al 2019). In this case women engagement becomes inevitable as they are 'subjects' not 'objects' of development. Bariko (2005) believes that people so affected by any development must be active doers, not passive recipients of development. It is in this regard that development cannot be delivered to people for it comes from within in order to transform their

living conditions. Esuefieni (2020) agrees that if there is no participation or engagement there is hardly any development

Abiona (2009) and Imhabekhai (2009) are of the view that the principle of citizen participation and engagement are the hub of all other developmental indices, thus, without gender or social bias. This is why Esuefieni (2020) postulates that development is people's partnership with those able to assist them identify their needs and increasingly assume the responsibility to plan, manage, control and assess the collective action that are necessary for development to occur. In this regard, women are veritable assets that must not be discarded by any nation if development must take place. Their involvement, participation and inclusion promote development in any society.

Women Development Intervention Process

Intervention is an act of making things better by involving hitherto excluded group of people. It is an admission of person or persons not originally in the seen to prevent duplication. Therefore women and young people possess the greatest understanding of their own needs and the creativity and energy to see old problems in new ways. Women intervention in programme design and delivery can drive innovation, increase retention of programme participants, lead to longer-lasting programme outcomes, and positively impact in development (Coonrod, 2011). In this instance; women and the girl child should be seen as drivers of societal development and progress.

Women intervention in any developmental process requires sufficient support, opportunities, and services to ensure that they participate meaningfully and equitably in decision-making processes and play leadership roles. Women are critical stakeholders in any nation. Their power, vision, commitment, and zeal to achieve success cannot be underrated, rather should be harness, tapped and encouraged for sustainable development. Hossian (2010) stated that women in a country are the most viable and potential human resources not only in population structure but also in social structure. They should be involved in development programmes which have variety of benefits, and will promote development within the concept of inclusiveness, equality, culture and communities.

According to Jin (2017), employing young people is powerful. This is because they are keys to economic

growth, stability, and social transformation. However, they exist several barriers such as; cultural, religious, traditional, and legal discriminations amongst others, yet, women contribution to economic development is well documented (Sanusi, 2012). In this regard, it becomes paramount that women inclusion to development should be of necessity for global sustainable development.

In most developing nations, girls and women are not involved in decision making process. They are discriminated about and face high level of alienation. In Nigeria for instance, young ones and women have suffered various traumatic experiences arising from neglect which have manifested itself in gender inequality and total discrimination with far-reaching developmental implications (Omoyibo, et al., 2010). Intervention of these highly neglected people in development will enhance better activities that will lead to breaking the bonds of poverty circle and set in motion wealth-creation and perpetual prosperity (Akpan, 2015).

Women integration in development is vital as it will help create choices in life, take action based on the decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of those actions. It will help them act on their behalf rather than at the direction of others (CYP, 2007-2015). Global Affairs Canada (2017) stated that young ones should be encouraged to take charge of their lives. In this circumstance, they should partake in decision making, planning, evaluating, and execution. When women are integrated, they have access to resources and transform their consciousness through their beliefs, values, and attitudes.

Education is one of the basic social amenities that must be accessible, free, and at the reach of both the young, middle age and the old. This is because development cannot take place without basic education. Adekola and Abanu (2010) believe that the difference between the developed and undeveloped countries of the world is related to the level of literacy among the populace. Therefore, women to be integrated in decision making, planning, implementation and evaluation, must have acquired certain degree of education. The most interesting aspect of education according to Holbom and Haralambos (2004) is that education is an institution that enables individuals to think freely and rationally which makes social progress and innovation possible. All the cultural, religious, and social impediments against education of

women and the girl child should be eliminated to pave way for free-access to education.

Without proper involvement, intervention, and integrated bio-social development of girl child and women, a nation cannot achieve her human and economic development goals intended. Although the government of Nigeria formulated policies, plans, and programmes for women empowerment welfare but implementing these programmes through Government Organizations and Non- Governmental Organisations is the challenge being encountered by the promoters of these programmes (Kelvin-Iloafu, et al., 2019).

Conclusion

Nigeria's population is most girl child dominated and women population accounts for about the half of the total population. It is inevitable involving, engaging, integrating, developing, and improving the economic environment to enhance effectiveness of women participation in economic activities and national development. In order to achieve economic prosperity and sustainable development, women must be involved in decision making, planning, implementation and evaluation of projects that affect them and tailored toward development. Therefore, there is the need to invest in education, make it accessible and qualitative so as to equip women with the requisite knowledge and skills required for active participation, engagement, integration, and intervention in national development. Since women economic empowerment, participation, and engagement propel development, their intervention will thrive in sustainable development of a nation. Therefore, it is imperative that for development to occur, women must be totally incorporated and educated in the affairs of the nation.

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