

Gender And Women's Economic Development In Nigeria: The Challenges Of Policy Implementation

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Abstract: Development is a wide expansive concept. It can broadly be categorized into three perspectives – political, economic, and social/moral. This paper, however, looks at economic development narrowing the discussion to women's economic development and the challenges women face in Nigeria as a result of their exclusion from policy formation. This paper is aimed at highlighting the gender-specific impact of development strategies and policies; the role of the United Nations (UN) in bringing women into the development process- as active participants and potential agents of change in global political economy and development. Economic development here means that people should be able to satisfy their material needs more or less adequately. They should participate in decision-making process. Women constitute half the world's population and their contribution to the economic sector in Nigeria, especially the agricultural sub-sector is enormous. Women have historically been and continue to be the principal custodians of Africa's agricultural and economic capacity. In spite of this, compared to their male counterparts, women are more economically marginalized. Due to patriarchal prejudices, women are not thriving entrepreneurs by themselves. This paper therefore seeks to analyze development policies in Nigeria as they particularly affect women's economic development. The aim is to seek avenues for women's empowerment and to deconstruct their patriarchal subjugation.

Key-words: Women, Economic development, Patriarchal subjugation, Empowerment

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I. INTRODUCTION

This business of womanhood is a heavy burden. ... How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy; you have to start learning them early, from a very early age. The earlier the better so that it is easy later on. Easy! As if it is ever easy. And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa!

----- Tsitsi Dangaremba, *Nervous Conditions*

Historically, theories about the nature of economic activity have ignored the contribution which 'women's work' makes to the global economy. This point was made by Ester Boserup as far back as 1970 when she argued that unremunerated work was frequently not included in official statistics, even though in subsistence production it actually had an important weight in the economy. (p. 52). Women have played and continue to play active roles in the development process. The woman by her nature, is the nurturer of life, and hence the very beginning of the development process. It is an inarguable fact that the woman is equally endowed to foster a meaningful and wholesome political, social and economic development in the society. Development policies and programmes tend not to view women as integral to the economic development process. Women engage in economically productive work and earn incomes, e.g in agriculture, informal sector, formal wage employment.

In Nigeria today, women are virtually in every profession as workers, entrepreneurs as well as professionals, and no more just home-keepers. Gbosi corroborates this point: "Traditionally, women were seen as home-keepers. Today, Nigerian women are no longer engaged in traditional farming and excluded from certain occupations. They are now in every profession. We now have women judges, engineers, accountants, bankers, doctors, pharmacists, just to mention a few of them. There are in fact only few areas of human endeavour where women are not competing keenly with men." (qtd in Kalu, p. 119) This paper therefore aims at identifying avenues of women's empowerment which here, is equalized to mean their economic development. The paper's thrust is to analyze development policies, particularly in Nigeria, as they affect women's economic development.

The Concepts of Gender and Development

Gender refers to a set of shared and evolving discursive habits that prescribe and proscribe behavior for persons in their social roles as men and women and that structure analysis and decision-making about the actions of others (Lindsey, 1998, p. 16). These discursive habits may be invoked deliberately or they may emerge, unintended from processes operating in the brains of people. The habits of gender include characterizations, inferences, expectations and decision algorithms Gender involves those social, cultural, and psychological aspects linked to males and females through particular social contexts. What a given society defines as masculine or feminine is a component of gender. Gender is therefore an achieved status (p. 3). Gender roles are defined as those expected attitudes and behaviours which a society associates with each sex. These include the rights and responsibilities that are normative for the sexes in a given society.

Gender as a social status is intertwined with social class and racial ethnic statuses to create an intersectional web within which individual and the groups they are part of are embedded. As a social institution in its own right, gender is a building block of the social order and has an impact on individuals much more than individuals impact on gender.

Tripp (2000) posits that gender norms and expectations are deeply ingrained in our culture, ideology, politics, art, and the mass media. The effects of gender are the source of the division of labour in the household and in child care, and are at the heart of job allocation and “glass ceiling” on women’s advancement. Gender is what culture makes out of the biological sex, it does not reproduce sex. Gender denotes the distinct sets of characteristics culturally ascribed to maleness and femaleness and signified by the adjectives ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’. (qtd in Lindsey,1998, p. 4)

Gender is a central part of identity. It is internalized so that people use its ‘rules’ as a way of defining themselves and evaluating their own behavior. Gender and power are intimately connected in the social world. As two early feminists researchers stated:

... it is in social interaction that women are constantly reminded of what their place is and here that they are put back in their place, should they venture out. Thus, social interaction serves as the locus of the most common means of social control employed against women. By being continually reminded of their inferior status in their interactions with others, and continually compelled to acknowledge that status in their patterns of behavior, women may internalize society’s definition of them as inferior so thoroughly that they are often unaware of what their status is. Inferiority becomes habitual, and the inferior place assumes the familiarity – and even desirability – of home. (p. 5)

Men engage in behaviours that convey high social power, whereas women’s customary behaviours convey lower social status and power.

Development cannot be viewed in isolation from the global distribution of resources, power and, indeed from inequalities in access to policy-making bodies at both national and international level. A society develops when it expands the range of possibilities for people to be fulfilled. Development is economic, political, and cultural, and is a process through which freedom in these domains is enhanced.

Seers (1969), posed the basic question about the meaning of development thus:

The questions to ask about a country’s development are therefore: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result “development” even if per capita income doubled. (p. 11)

Development, in the view of Todaro (1977), “must, therefore, be conceived of as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of absolute poverty.” Development, in its essence, must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory and toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually “better.” (p. 85) Goulet and others identify three basic components or core values which should serve as a conceptual basis and practical guideline for understanding the “inner” meaning of development. These core values are life-sustenance, self-esteem, and freedom.

Development is both a physical reality and a state of mind in which society has, through some combination of social, economic, and institutional processes, secured the means for obtaining a better life. According to Jhingan (1997), development in all societies must have the following three objectives:

1. To raise or increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life-sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health and protection
2. To raise the levels of living standards
3. To expand the ranges of economic and social choices available to individual and nations by freeing them from all forms of servitude and dependence (p. 6)

Ester Boserup again, was the first person to focus on the ways in which women were affected differently from men through the modernization project. Thus gender awareness led to development organizations and governments formulating policies geared towards the involvement of women to a greater degree in development, for instance, the United Nations Decade for Women which will be discussed later in this paper.

II. DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES

Women in Development (WID):

The role of women in economic development has emerged as a major issue within the last two decades. The argument that development has an adverse effect on women, and often leads to their impoverishment and exploitation, is well documented. The traditional economic definition of labour is consistent with the view that only those functions which create a surplus for profit in the market place are considered aspects of productive work. Thus the international economic system imposes a reality which excludes the majority of work women perform, such as child care, domestic labour, and subsistence farming. Since the subsistence farming roles of women have been de-emphasized if not ignored in evaluating labour force activities in the Third World, development policies have also largely ignored their contributions as well. Such policies are designed to upgrade the economic standards of families by concentrating on the assumed male head of household, who is seen as the breadwinner, with his dependent wife in the homemaker role. Unremunerated work by women is not included because it is not part of the market of paid exchanges for goods or services and so is not viewed as economically significant. By failing to acknowledge the varied productive roles of rural women, many development programmes have not only fallen short but have also actually undermined the fragile nature of the subsistence activities of these women. Other problems which contribute to women's impoverishment during development include the loss of traditional crafts and goods, through imports of manufactured goods and the dependence formerly self-sufficient communities now face as a result of commercialization and cash crop farming. Mitter and Van Lujken claim that women constituted and continue to constitute the majority of home-workers because everywhere women constitute the poorest sections of society.

The WID literature produced in the 1970s put the issue of women firmly on the political agenda, highlighted the inequalities of opportunity and the disproportionate contribution which women made to the development process. One of the key criticisms of WID is that it defeated its main aim. The aim of WID was to bring in women, but women were already involved in the development process. According to Ashworth and Allison, the WID idea also contained the seeds of its own failure, because it recognized as visible producers only those whose commodities could be traded. The economic role of women as subsistence farmers, providers and full-time careers, which is the cornerstone of economic life, remained uncounted and unrewarded. (qtd in Steans, 1998, p. 148)

Critics also argued that WID policy documents avoided and obscured issues of inequalities and power by presenting the issue of assistance to women as a purely technical exercise. It did not address the broader re-distributional issues that assisting women raised. The WID approach ignored the broader context in which women-specific projects were inscribed. Increases in the productivity of women were matched by relief from reproductive tasks. Women were too often regarded as 'victims' in need of assistance, rather than farmers, workers, investors and trade unionists.

Steans (1998) argues further that development policies are already built upon assumptions about women's single domestic role which ignore the ways in which women already contribute to and are affected by development processes. The consequences of such a stance in practice, and indeed of other development policies, and indeed to development particularly in the crucial area of subsistence agriculture. In the 1980s a survey conducted by INSTRAW found that out of ninety-six countries, only six included women's issues as central issues in their development plans. (pp. 147-8)

WID failed to improve unequal relationships. Secondly, development projects were unsustainable as development projects failed to consider the multiple roles carried out by women, leading to a development model that in the end disadvantaged women.

Women and Development (WAD):

This is a theoretical and practical approach to development. It was introduced into gender studies scholarship in the second half of the 1970s, it is traced to the first World Conference on Women in Mexico city in 1975 organized by the UN.

Theoretical Approach: WAD suggested that development was only made possible by the involvement of women, and that rather than being simply passive recipients of development aid, they should be actively involved in development projects. The WAD approach suggested that there be women-only development projects that were thought to remove women from the patriarchal hegemony that would exist if women participated in development alongside men in a patriarchal culture. In this sense, the theoretical framework of WAD was focused on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism, instead of focusing on women's relationship to development. This theory seeks to understand women's issues from the perspectives of neo-Marxism and dependency theory.

Practical Approach: the WAD approach emphasizes the relationship between women and the work that they perform in their societies as economic agents in both public and domestic realms. WAD stresses the unique nature of the roles women play in the maintenance and development of their societies, with the understanding that the integration of women into development efforts would serve to reinforce the existing structures of inequality present in societies overrun by patriarchal interests. The WAD approach stresses the distinctive nature of women's knowledge, work, goals and responsibilities, as well as advocating for the recognition of their distinctiveness. Believing that development agencies are dominated by patriarchal interests, WAD subscribes to women-only initiatives.

Criticisms:

1. That women-only development projects would struggle or ultimately fail, due to their scale and the marginalized status of women
2. The WAD approach suffers from a tendency of viewing women as a class, paying little attention to the differences among women including race and ethnicity, and prescribe development endeavours that may only serve to address the needs of a particular group.
3. WAD fails to fully consider the relationships between patriarchy, modes of production, and the marginalization of women. It also presumes that the position of women around the world will improve when international conditions become more equitable.
4. WAD has also been strongly criticized for its sole focus on the productive side of women's work, ignoring the reproductive aspect of women's work and lives.

III. GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT (GAD)

GAD is aimed at 'removing disparities in social, economic, and political balances between women and men as a precondition for achieving people-oriented development. This approach focuses on the socially constructed basis of differences between men and women and the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations. This approach was influenced by the views of Ann Oakley and Gayle Rubin which emphasize the social relationship between men and women. These relationships they argue have systematically subordinated women. This approach departs from WID which perceived women's problem in terms of their biological differences rather than gender. GAD challenged the WID focus on women as an important 'target group' and 'untapped resources' for development. GAD's concern was to understand how women and men are socially constructed and how these constructions are powerfully reinforced by the social activities that both define and are defined by them.

The primary focus of GAD was on gender division of labour and gender as a relation of power embedded in institutions. Two major frameworks are adopted by the GAD approach namely 'gender roles' and 'social relations analysis'. The 'Gender roles' framework focuses on social construction of identities within the household. It also reveals the expectations from 'maleness and femaleness', in their relative access to resources. Social relations analysis foregrounds the social dimensions of hierarchical power relations embedded in social institutions and its determining influence on the relative position of men and women in society. this relative position tends to discriminate against women. The GAD approach is not concerned specifically with women, but with the way in which a society assigns roles, responsibilities and expectations to both women and men. GAD applies gender analysis to expose the ways in which men and women work together, presenting results in neutral terms of economics and efficiency. In a bid to create gender equality, GAD's policies aim to redefine traditional gender role expectations.

Criticisms:

1. It is criticized for emphasizing the social differences between men and women, neglecting in the process, the bonds existing between them and the potential for changes in roles.

2. That GAD does not deeply study social relations and so may not explain how these relations can undermine programmes directed at women.

Feminist Theories of Development:

Feminists have attempted to address the shortcomings of existing models and theories of development by incorporating an analysis of gender or to develop alternative models which make gender central to understanding development. Feminist politics centres on immediate issues like reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination and sexual violence as well as long-term issues as patriarchy, stereotyping, objectification, and oppression. Themes related to development include the inequality between genders, the disproportionate amount of work performed by women, and yet the absence of women in development of policy or group decision-making – in general, all of this being attributed to the subordination of women.

During the second and third waves, feminists interested in inequality, poverty and gender relations produced a significant body of critical ideas on development, while issues raised by feminists became important in international agencies dealing with development problems – so much so that feminist development theory now forms a recognizable system of concepts, discourses, and practices. Feminist critics range from those who lobby governance institutions for better economic policies founded on gender equality and social and environmental well-being to those who push for something completely different, as with good health and education, clean water and fuel, child care, and basic nutrition at a reasonable cost for the majority.

Economic Empowerment of Women: Global and National Efforts:

Women's empowerment is undoubtedly pivotal to the socio-economic and political development of a nation. A nation benefits fully when both women and men contribute their utmost in social cohesion, economic growth, peace and prosperity. Women's economic empowerment is an achievement of women to be able to choose and control their economic activities and incomes. It is also an enhancement of women's rights to enable them to have control over their lives and also contribute to the society at large. The main objective of women's economic empowerment is to create just and equitable societies. Women empowerment and economic development are closely related; development cannot singularly bridge the gap of inequality between men and women. Empowering women may benefit development.

Global:

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo established a new consensus on two fundamental points:

- a) Empowering women and improving their status are essential to realizing the full potential of economic, political and social development.
- b) Empowering women is an important end in itself. And as women acquire the same status, opportunities and social, economic and legal rights as men, as they acquire the right to reproductive health and the right to protection against gender based violence, human well-being will be enhanced. (Barnett, 1997, p. 12)

Women's empowerment is the new phrase in economic development. The word women empowerment essentially means that the women have the power to regulate the activities in day to day in the external environment as in the social, political and economic terms. There is a bidirectional relationship between economic development and women's empowerment defined as improving the ability of women to access the constituent of development – in particular health, education, earning opportunities, rights, and political participation (Bhoganadam et al, 2014, p. 3). Women's economic empowerment is key to realizing women's rights and gender equality; their agency and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions.

The United Nations (UN) has seen itself as having a pivotal role to play in promoting development. In 1993, the United States Foreign Assistance Act led to the setting up of USAID. This act required women to be involved in decision-making bodies dealing with aid and development issues. Consequently UN agencies, including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, UNESCO, the ILO and FAO, were prompted to set up special offices that concentrated on women's role in the development process. (Steans, 1998, p. 146) The UN initiative required the attention of governments and gave women some access to policy-making by insisting that women's offices were set up within development agencies. These offices were often poorly funded. These offices enabled women to travel and meet and challenged the idea that men were the breadwinners in all societies. The UN recommendations were not implemented by many states.

1976- 1985 was designated as the United Nations Decade for the Advancement of Women. This period also provided the opportunity to assess women's contribution to development, especially in the crucial area of subsistence agriculture. In 1975, the United Nations Inter-governmental Conference was held in Mexico. The

aim was to discuss the situation of women and how to improve it. This culminated in declaring the year 1975, the International Women's Year (IWY); and a World Plan of Action was adopted for the advancement of women, some of whose objectives include:

1. Elimination of discrimination against women
2. Solving the problems which place women in an inferior position
3. Integrating women in development
4. Increasing the involvement of women in political life and in international co-operation and maintenance of peace. (Kalu, 1989, p. 122)

The UN Decade for women, provided the platform where for the first time, attempts were made to assess women's contribution to development, particularly in the crucial area of subsistence agriculture. In 1980, the second conference was held in Copenhagen. The third UN conference held in Nairobi in 1985, at the end of the UN Decade for women, produced a document called "Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (FLSAW). The fourth UN conference on women held in Beijing in 1995, and produced, The Draft Platform for Action. So many issues were raised at the conference, followed up with so many resolutions. One of the main messages of the conference to the international institutions and donor agencies was the need to pay more attention to strengthening the economic opportunities for enhancing the status of women. Another issue was concerned with women's access to labour markets, and to the new employment opportunities generated through economic growth. The Beijing Conference has gingered a lot of governments to promoting women's welfare and participation in economic activities in their respective countries.

Since the UN Decade for women in 1976, UN development agencies have included sections that are specifically charged to advance the interests of women. These sections have pushed for a greater degree of gender sensitivity in government policies, for awareness of the problems of women's double burden, for equal access to and control over land and property, and for equal access to credit. (Steans, 1998, p. 151)

Several bodies have been formed to deal with the problems of women on a global scale. Some of these include United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Women's World Banking, ACCION International, Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), International Alliance of Women, International Council of Women, among others. These approaches did not really address the root issues of gender inequality and disadvantage, or involve women in making decisions about their lives. In this regard, one of the key shortcomings of many gender and development projects, according to Chant and Gutmann cited in (Makinde, 2005, p.62), has been the lack of engagement with men. Men were regarded as the problem, projects continued to deal with the role of women in society and tried to help women's empowerment. However, since the early 1990s there has been an increasing focus on incorporating men into gender and development projects and a consideration of the ways in which men's roles and positions in society are socially constructed (p. 63).

National Efforts:

In Nigeria, several efforts had been made in the past to enhance the status of women. In the present, efforts are still continuing in this direction and are, if anything, becoming far reaching. In 1989, the National Women Commission was established by Decree Number 30. Some of its major objectives are:

1. To promote the welfare of women in general
2. To promote the full utilization of women in the development of human resources and to bring about the acceptance as full participants in every phase of national development with equal rights and corresponding obligations. (Kalu, 1989, p.123)

In the past, in Nigeria, programmes such as Better life for Rural Women, Family Support Programme, and Family Economic Advancement Programme were set up to advance the cause of women. Besides these programmes, other economic empowerment programmes have established aimed at economically empowering women. Some of these economic empowerment programmes include but are not limited to the following:

Poverty Eradication: Since women comprise the majority of the population below the poverty line and are very often in situations of extreme poverty, given the harsh realities of intra-household and social discrimination, macro-economic policies and poverty eradication programmes will specifically address the needs and problems of such women. There will be improved implementation of programmes which are already women oriented with special targets for women.

Micro-Credit: to enhance women's access to credit for consumption and production, the establishment of new and strengthening of existing micro-credit mechanisms and micro-finance institutions will be undertaken so that the outreach of credit is enhanced. Over the past two decades, microfinance has come to be known as the single most important gendered development programme promoted by governments and non-profit organizations.

Microfinance organizations tout their effects on women and claim that microfinance may have dramatic effects in reducing poverty. (Kevane, 1987, p. 6)

Women and Economy: Women's perspectives will be included in designing and implementing macro-economic and social policies by institutionalizing their participation in such processes. Their contribution to socio-economic development as producers and workers will be recognized in the formal and informal sectors (including home based workers) and appropriate policies relating to employment and to her working conditions will be drawn up. Women's attempts to translate paid employment into financial independence, however, are often thwarted by lack of access to capital, inadequate education and training and because women carry an unequal burden of family responsibilities. It is a fact, according to UN Women that, companies greatly benefit from increasing employment and leadership opportunities for women, which is shown to increase organizational effectiveness and growth. It is estimated that companies with three or more women in senior management functions score higher in all dimensions of organizational performance. (qtd in Steans, 1998, p.127)

Women Entrepreneurship: According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2012), entrepreneurship which is the act of being an entrepreneur, implies the capacity and willingness to conceptualize, undertake, organize, and manage productive new ventures, accepting all attendant risks and seeking profit as a reward. Entrepreneurship remains the major vehicle through which women entrepreneurs enhance their economic development and contribute to socio-economic development as well. Female entrepreneurs in formal and informal sectors are active participants in building and sustaining economic growth and development. Allen et al. 2007: Brush et al., 2006, submit that "... business-owning women are amongst the fastest growing entrepreneurial populations in the world; and women entrepreneurs make significant contributions to innovation, employment, wealth creation, poverty alleviation and the development of economies globally, regionally and nationally. (qtd in Okeke-Uzodike et al, 2018, p. 150) Empowering women through entrepreneurship is seen or believed to be one of the easiest ways to ensure gender equity.

Women engagement in collective actions: Women's access to agricultural inputs and credit was constrained by many reasons. Many formal institutions that offer credit required physical collateral that women did not have. As a result, they were heavily biased towards men and male headed households which had more assets and were better represented in formal groups such as cooperatives which enabled access to credit. Other sources of credit such as commercial and development banks typically provided loans to sectors where the majority of women were not involved. For example, the provision of credit for technological services was biased to export crops which are dominantly controlled by men. Therefore, in order to overcome this barrier, women engaged in different forms of collective actions that were envisaged to reverse the situation. (Jeckoniah, 2017, p. 54) Collective can occur around any social, economic or political issue. It can be formal or informal, ranging from voluntary community-level self-help groups to formal groups advocating for change at the global level.

Policy Gaps/Recommendations:

Policy Gaps

Development agencies are still largely dominated by white, middle-class men who base their policies on assumptions about households, families and gender relations drawn from Western experience. Resultantly, development strategies frequently reflect ignorance about the role of women in many societies and are not sensitive to how prevailing gender relations both influence and are influenced by the impact of development strategies. The burden of debt and economic policies, which are themselves largely conditioned by global constraints, is having particular effects on women in countries throughout the world. The political leadership of Nigeria has failed to implement development programmes and policies. This lack of political will is obvious in the implementation processes of the different development policies of the government since independence. (Deinbitem, 2018, p. 10)

For policies to be successful, they should involve target groups and they should allow for participatory system, whereby policy-makers plan with the people rather than for the people in meeting their felt needs. Makinde (2005), in fact, submits that "the problem facing developing countries, most of the time, is not that of policy formulation but of implementation" (pp. 66-7). Governments', Nigeria inclusive, total commitment to the international treaties such as the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is seriously in doubt. This treaty sets standards for women's rights in the political, cultural, economic, social and family sectors, and calls for action to redress and arrest many forms of gender discrimination. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 18, 1979.

Major gaps in policy prevent women from performing to their full potential in socio, economic and political life:

a) **Integration of Women in Mainstream Development Policies:** the main policy gap is that governments seldom integrate the concerns and interests of women into mainstream policies. Development policies typically emphasize export oriented growth centred on cash crops, primary commodities and manufactures – largely controlled by men. Those policies neglect the informal sector and subsistence agriculture

– the usual preserve of women. (Barnett, p. 4) Much of this gap is embodied in laws that deny women equality with men in their rights to own land, borrow money and enter contracts. In many Third World states, women still constitute the main producers of food, and provide a variety of other home-produced goods which make a vital contribution to the overall welfare of families and local communities. Frequently this work is ignored by policy-making elites and this continues to result in serious distortions in the assessment of Gross Domestic Product and National Income of developing states. This distortion has a devastating impact on Third World states generally and on women and children in particular. (GRs, p. 52)

b) **Counting Women's Work:** A second policy gap is that governments do not consider much of women's to be economically productive and thus do not count it. Without good information about what women really do – and how much they produce- governments have little incentive to respond with economic policies that include women. (p. 4)

Policy Recommendations:

- a) Empowerment of women should be a focal issue in determining the status of women
- b) The National Commission of Women should be encouraged to safeguard the rights of women.
- c) Women should be adequately represented in Parliament to lay a strong foundation for their participation in decision-making at the national level.
- d) Nigeria should ratify all international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights for women, e.g the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), founded in 1993.
- e) The Mexico Plan of Action (1975), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), the Beijing Declaration as well as the Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome Document adopted by the UNGA Session on Gender Equality and Development & Peace for the 21st century, titled “Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action” should be unreservedly endorsed by Nigeria.
- f) Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.
- g) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process. Mainstreaming means incorporating gender concerns into development strategies and policies as a matter of course than as ‘add ons’.
- h) Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.
- i) Self Employed Women's Association should be set up and be engaged in improving women's economic status since women are fundamental to the process of economic development.

In the area of policy formulation and decision-making, Government must do the following:

- a) Women's equality in power sharing and active participation in decision-making, including decision-making in political process at all levels be ensured for the achievement of the goals of empowerment.
- b) All measures be taken to guarantee women equal access to and full participation in decision-making bodies at every level, including the legislative, executive, judicial, corporate, statutory bodies, as also the advisory Commissions, Committees, Boards, Trusts etc. Women-friendly personnel policies will be drawn up to encourage women to participate effectively in the developmental process.
- c) Policies, programmes and systems be established to ensure mainstreaming of women's perspectives in all developmental processes, as catalysts, participants and recipients.
- d) Government should create the enabling environment for enterprise; promote entrepreneurship; develop micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; build productive capacity; and encourage inclusive growth.
- e) Government should not only increase the resources at women's immediate disposal but focus more on addressing unequal social relations and the ‘structures of opportunity’ faced by women, including their sense of collective as well as individual agency.

IV. CONCLUSION

Women constitute half the world's population and their contributions to the economic sector in Nigeria, especially the agricultural sub-sector is enormous. Women are active participants and potential agents of change in global political economy and development. Empowerment of women is a primal issue in determining the status of women. Women's economic empowerment, and their economic development, is a key to realizing women's rights and gender equality; their agency and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions. Entrepreneurship is one avenue of empowerment through which women entrepreneurs enhance their economic development and contribute to socio-economic development as well.

Development policies, due to patriarchal prejudices, have adversely affected women's economic development. Development strategies and policies have not take into reckoning the role of women in many

societies, Nigeria inclusive, and are not sensitive to how prevailing gender relations both influence and are influenced by the impact of development strategies. There must therefore evolve gender-sensitive and socially responsible government policies. The ideal government strives to achieve a favourable and commendable level of development so much so that its citizens appreciate the country they live in as well as the present body leading them. Achieving development objectives requires effective implementation of policies and intervention strategies. Policies at different levels of government should be aligned to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly to Goal 5 – Achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls. This goal seeks to provide women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes. This will fuel sustainable economics and benefit societies and humanity at large.

Micro-finance policies which are sensitive to the impact of development for women should be given real influence in decision-making. There should be a legal framework to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Nigeria should ratify all international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights for women, for example, Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

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