

Empowering Women and Youthe for Sustainable National Devdlopment

Omenka, J. I

Department Of Political Science, Benue State University, Makurdi.

Abstract: *There is no mincing of words that Nigeria is a disorganized society with very weak ineffective institutional (police, church and family) control .The economy is comatose. In a society, such as this, it is inevitable that they will be a high rate of unemployment, especially among the youth and women who are the weakest among the weak. In such society too, it is not unexpected that there would be widespread development of a negative and rebellious culture such as cultism, crime, prostitution, and other deviant behaviors. Indeed due to the high level of unemployment in the country, most parent and guardian device various illegitimate means of meeting their ends by including in trafficking in person. Young women are adolescent, who are promised lucrative job abroad usually, fined them being turn into prostitute on arrival. Within the country itself, women face discrimination in different area of Endeavour as well as battering from their husband. the paper is an exposition of this menace. It highlights the lost as well as the roles of women and youth in the economy development of Nigeria.*

I. Introduction

In Nigeria today, women and youth constitute more than half of the population and have contributed immensely to the social-economic development of the society. They have played roles such as being mothers, producers of goods and service, community organizers, and social, culture and political activities (United Nation, 1996). In spite of their large number and crucial functions, their condition in the society remains rather very depressing. They are discriminated against, oppressed and exploited. On a daily basis, they are subjected to harsh treatment in a variety of ways. On the streets, in the house and, even in the workplace. In this paper, an attempt is made at examining the place of women and the youths in our country today with the aim of determining how best to invest in them and accordingly achieve greater socio-economic development.

II. Conceptual Clarifications

A simple dictionary definition of women views her as an adult female human being while by youth, it implies the time of life when a person, whether male or female, is young, especially the time before such a person becomes an adult. For the purpose of this discussion the two concepts will be examined together. In doing this, we shall move away from the dictionary explanations and look at them from the perspective of what they are in our society today.

According to Anger (2004), a woman is a being whose rights are not very much guaranteed in our society. She is a person who in her youth stays at home when her brother goes to school. Her views are sought only when men run out of view. She stay at home when men are out .worse of all she has little or no voice in the society if the understanding of woman is in our society is this low that the youth is even worse off. In Nigeria today, an average youth is a frustrated being who cannot achieve the goal he set for himself. The youth is that person between the age bracket of 10-30 years who is involved in hard drugs, cultism, and all other form of social malaise.

There are the "Area Boys" while the girls are "Commercial Sex Workers". They are the macho men that are only good to be used as political thugs. Today, the woman and the youth in our society represent the disempowerment species. They are the weak, the discriminated against the youth inspires of this perception of the Nigeria woman and the youth point must be made very remarkable contribution to the social economic development of Nigeria. Either in politics, economy or in sports several of them have individual and collectively sharp and position the occupy.

Accepting our population above that even a good number of Nigeria youth and women have made remarkable achievement in various fields of endeavors, the majority still remains disempowered raise quite a lot of question .for instances, what is responsible for the precarious state in majority of our youth and women empowerment?

Answering the last question in particular, sand brook (1993; 80) reasoned that the concept, empower should be viewed from multiple angles .he noted that

Empowering is the multi-dimensional process which involves the transformation of the economic, social, psychological, political and legal circumstances of the powerless.

Applying the concept in the specific case of the youth and woman, it implies not only positive changes in the lives but also the dismantling of the culture norm and traditional practices that devalued, disempowered and dispossessed them. The process must also be necessarily include the expansion of their access to educational opportunities, facilities for skill acquisition of authority.

Women empowerment in particular entails fundamental alteration in power relations between genders in the distribution of societal resources. Empowering women does not mean that they will dominate the men folks. It only implies that they will be accorded opportunities to develop their individual talents and to contribute more meaningfully to national development.

The possible effects of this include accelerated and balanced social development in addition to improved welfare , education and health for the youths and the adolescence, or children. In other words, improvement in socio-economic condition of women would translate into improved welfare of children.

Causative factors

The preceding analysis shows how women and the youths in our society are portrayed. Experts have identified a wide range of factor that could be held responsible for this despicable status of women and youths in our society. The first group of causative factors falls under socio-cultural rationalizations. It is contented here that cultural plays an important role in the way women and the youths are held in contemporary Nigeria.

According to Okpeh. O (2004:24)

Contemporary Nigeria is a patriarchal society in which the male ideology of. Dominance is unmistakably prevalent. Women are seen as naturally and or biologically inferior to men. It is this perception that determines the status of the man and woman and what they should and what they should not do.

Similarly, the youth are expected to take a cue from the aged and not to be actively involved in the decision making process, expect went the aged are not present. Consequently, within the culturally constructed power matrix of all communities in Nigeria, women and the youth are invariably “seen” rather than “heard” their roles being basically restricted to the background, as wives and servant.

In Nigeria today our custom permit early marriages allow older men in their sixties and seventies to marry 14 years old girls, condone child abuse and molestation, encourage genital multination pariah etc . Our convention, habit and custom permit under aged children to be involve in street begging. This is prevalent in the Muslim dominated nortnen part of the country. In other part of the country, children can be given out to relatives’ and even strangers to be used as servants. Often times, such children end up trafficked out of the country .others are used for ritual purpose. For instance ,the national agency for the prohibition of trafficking in human person (NAPTIP) in a recent release ,said it rescued 243 victims of human trafficking aged 15-20 at bus station , airport and border towns between July and Nov. 2005 (Daily Sun,Dec.8,2005 :8). According to the agency most of the victims that were interviewed revealed living in towns. These relative unfortunately decide to trade them off for monetary gains.

Apart from the social culture explanation, the condition of women and youth in the society are what they are today due to the down turn in the economy. In Nigeria today, the productive sector of the economy is comatose. Most industries are grounded. The result is high rate of unemployment, especially among the productive youthful age. Out of Frustration, some of these young unemployed youth turn to prostitute, robbery and the use of hard drugs as an alternative escape route from the stark reality that they face. it is no exaggeration to say that such usage deplete the youth mentality, financially and socially, leaving them wasted and denying the nation their human resource potentials.

Not being gainfully employed and thus economically powerless, Nigeria woman and youth become a negligible and unrecognized force that is of no consequence politically. This mean that they are unable to participate in the policy making process. This in return means not being in a position to decide their own fate or take decision that will affect their own well-being. This development keeps them in perpetual state of helpless.

III. Towards Empowering Women And Youth For Sustainable Nation Development.

In the preceding analysis, we noted that a combination of factors that have to do with our belief system and the poor state of economy have conspire together to deny our woman and the youth the opportunity to realize their full potentials. This in turn retards national social-economic development. to adequately address the problem women an youth in the country are face therefore required serious correction in the convention habit custom, and biases planted in the heart and reasoning of our people for instance, to curb customary practices like prudish, genital mutilation, etc that are inimical to the growth and development of women and the youth, there is the need to undertake sustained community based enlighten program me that will highlight the evil of these practice.

Beside this, a more pragmatic effort should be made to initiate programs and measures that will enhance appropriate socialization and Upbringing in households where heads are particularly absent. It is a well known fact that children who have good family upbringing, who stay in school, and who participate in religious activities actively are less likely than others to smoke, drink and take drugs. Such children are less likely to end up in prostitution, armed robbery and other forms of social vices.

In addition to the above, our government at all levels should enforce federal legislation that has to do with full enrolment and retention of all children and adolescent in the educational system so as to eliminate or reduce street begging, truancy, etc .To facilitate sustainable development, non-formal adult and mass literacy program me should equally be strengthened. Vocational skills training should be emphasized.

There should be a basis for sound vocation training program me. In Nigeria today, avenues for skill training associated with vocation such as plumbing, carpentry, swimming, electricity, mechanic, building construction, water system, etc exists but do not appear to have solid and enforceable standards. Most people acquire such skills from a “one man shop “ by the roadside. The skills acquisition scheme of the National Director for Employment (NDE) is designed to achieve this purpose. Unfortunately, however, the directorate operates only in name than in actual practice. Like most other government parastatals, the operation of NDE has become moribund. The result of this development as Ega (2004) pointed out is a situation whereby:

A large number of the adolescence and youth enter the world of work while teenagers, after dropping out of school (or not entering at all). Indeed, about 5% of them enter the labour market without any secondary or technical education. They have also received very little pre- vocational training, directly related to the development of the skills needed in the world of work. Thus, by the time they enter the labour market, the vast majority of young Nigerians do so with minimal skills. Some remain unemployed but much large numbers are under-employed. In the rural areas choices are limited and the majority contend themselves with peasant agriculture.

It is evident from the foregoing that the Nigerian government has not shown enough commitment to the development of human resources, especially, as it affects women and the youths. This has resulted in a large number of unskilled persons who cannot find any relevance in the economy and are therefore only too willing to be exploited for a pittance.

Above all, there is need for the government to make the economic environment conducive for the survival of citizens. Some of the collapsed industries can be revitalized. This will create more employment opportunities and help stem the rate of crimes prevalent among the youths.

IV. Conclusion

In this paper, we highlighted the social problems facing women and the youths in Nigeria today. We noted that there is a poor perception of these segments of the people in the society. While we acknowledge that there are women and youths who have made very remarkable contributions to the socio-economic development of the country, a large number of the mare social miscreants. This situation, we noted, is helped by combination of factors, which have to do with our value system, cultural practices and poor economic base.

In order to arrest the problems identified, we suggest that there is the need for the government to increase its commitment to education and capacity building at the formal levels so as to imbue our women and young people with the skills and confidence to face life’s challenges without giving themselves out as commodities to be trafficked for a profit. In the large society will be better for it.

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