

A MORE EQUAL WORLD THROUGH GENDER EQUALITY: A SURE WAY TO CURB SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper centered on creating a more equal world through gender equality: a sure way to curbing insecurity in Nigeria. It stated the objectives of the Gender Policy which is to bring a gender perspective into all aspects of planning policy. It dwell also on signs of gender disparity, how gender equality can curb security challenges in Nigeria and the role of gender equality in country's stability. It also highlighted on creating a more equal world and other ways to fight for gender inequality. The paper concluded that God created all equal, and gender inequality is a situation created by man and therefore recommended among others that the Ministry of women affairs should be empowered by equipping her with all the finances needed and making policies that will enable her empower women, women should be given a place in the key positions in government, girls should be allowed to form their characters naturally, any percentage allotted to women in constitutions should be occupied by women at that rate, culture/beliefs should not be brought to bear only on the girl-child or women etc.

Key words: Gender, Equality, Curb, Equal World and Women.

Introduction

Gender equality, also known as sexual equality or equality of the sexes, is the state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities, including economic participation, decision-making and the state of valuing different behaviors, aspirations and needs equally, regardless of gender. (Wikipedia). Gender equality is a fundamental human right. Yet despite progress, women and girls around the world do not fully experience equal rights and their potential as economic, social and sustainable development change-agents remains untapped. It will currently take over 267 years to achieve equality in terms of women's economic empowerment and participation. Ms Lina AI Qaddoumi, (2021).

Gender equality is an essential factor in a country's security and stability. Excluding women from actively participating in society can increase the risk of instability. Gender equality is not only about doing what is right or about social justice; it is also an important element in economic development and a critical predictor of stability and security, which can inform and improve work on conflict prevention.

Empowering women and girls helps expand economic growth, promote social development and establish more stable and just societies. In fact, studies show that women and men participating equally in the economy could add a further US\$28 trillion to global annual gross domestic product (GDP) by 2025. Ms Lina AI, (2021). The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underscore women's empowerment as an important development objective, in and of itself, and highlight the relevance of gender equality to addressing a wide range of global challenges. (<https://www.unglobalcompact.org>).

There is no gainsaying that the adoption of the National Gender Policy is a watershed in the effort to create a more equal world and promote Gender Equality but the challenge is in translating the policy into action in terms of concrete programme and projects. There is always a problem in translating definite theories into practice as concerning policy and strategic programmes, projects and activities.

In order to operationalize this strategy, the National Gender Policy must be put to practice. Some steps needed in achieving this will be the focus of this paper.

Objectives of the National Gender Policy

In a nut shell, the objective of the gender policy is to bring a gender perspective into all aspects of planning policy, developing legislation and transformation activities in Nigeria. The gender policy should address the systematic inequalities between women and men in society without ignoring the fundamental differences between them. It prioritizes the empowerment of women as a way of achieving gender equality and is based on the premise that gender inequality is about power relations between men and women, and that, any policy, plan or practice that seeks gender equality must balance these power relations for the optimum benefit of both parties. The aim is to incorporate gender policy statements into all national goals and sectorial objectives, by analysing the ways and manner that gender inequality intervenes with the achievement of local, national, regional and global policy outcomes. Implementing the policy will therefore not be the sole responsibility of the national women's machinery but rather, a shared responsibility of all stakeholders. The gender policy will articulate the problems, the challenges, the imperatives, and there-from the vision, goals, commitments and outputs, strategies to achieve gender equality, as well as a framework of implementation and monitoring.

Signs of Gender Disparity

Globally, women are less likely to participate in the labour market than men and they are less likely to become entrepreneurs due to initial difficulties in setting up business from gender bias and lack of access to capital to balancing family responsibilities.

Girls and boys see gender inequality in their homes and communities every day – in textbooks, in the media and among the adults who care for them.

Parents may assume unequal responsibility for household work, with mothers bearing the brunt of caregiving and chores. The majority of low-skilled and underpaid community health workers who attend to children are also women, with limited opportunity for professional growth.

And in schools, many girls receive less support than boys to pursue the studies they choose. This happens for a variety of reasons: The safety, hygiene and sanitation needs of girls may be neglected, barring them from regularly attending class. Discriminatory teaching practices and education materials also produce gender gaps in learning and skills development. As a result, nearly 1 in 4 girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are neither employed nor in education or training – compared to 1 in 10 boys (UNICEF/un1235471/willocq).

In early childhood, gender disparities start out small. Girls have higher survival rates at birth, and are more likely to be developmentally on track, and are just as likely to participate in preschool. Among those who reach secondary school, girls tend to outperform boys in reading across every country where data are available.

But the onset of adolescence can bring significant barriers to girls' well-being. Gender norms and discrimination heighten their risk of unwanted pregnancy, HIV and AIDS, and malnutrition. Especially in emergency settings and in places where menstruation remains taboo, girls are cut off from the information and supplies they need to stay healthy and safe.

How Gender Equality Can Curb Security Challenges in Nigeria

Research by Crespo-Sancho (2017) highlighted on women, peace, and security provides strong evidence that women's empowerment and gender equality are associated with more peaceful and stable outcomes. Such findings include:

- Violence against women is a predictor of whether a society is generally prone to violent conflict.
- The larger the gender gap (defined as the differences in experiences and opportunities between men and women), the more likely a country is to be involved in inter- and intrastate conflict and to use violence as a first response in a conflict setting.
- The higher the level of violence against women, the more likely a country may not be to comply with international norms and treaty agreements, and the less peacefully it will operate in the international system.
- Higher gender equality corresponds with a country's lower likelihood of using military force to resolve disputes with other countries.
- The severity of violence used in international conflict decreases with higher gender equality.
- Countries with low human rights standards, including low standards regarding gender equality, are more likely to have militarized and violent interstate disputes.

The Role of Gender Equality in Country's Stability

1. Equality in participation

An important factor related to gender equality for security and development is women's quality participation in positions of power, including in politics, peace discussions, and negotiations. It also urges states to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional, and international institutions, as well as in mechanisms for preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts.

According to Crespo-Sancho C.(2017)

Research has yielded the following findings in this area:

- Including women in peace processes has a positive impact on the durability of peace agreements, which thus prevents conflict from reoccurring.
- Including women as negotiators, mediators, signatories, and witnesses increases the probability of an agreement lasting at least two years by 20 percent, and the probability of it lasting at least 15 years by 35 percent.
- There is a positive relation between the participation of women's groups and peace deal results. When women are less involved, agreements are reached less often, and the likelihood of reaching an agreement is even lower when women groups are not involved at all.

2. Gender economic equality

Women's economic empowerment has a multiplier effect on a country's local and national well-being. Empowering women and promoting gender equality is crucial to accelerating development and producing more equal societies, which are important elements in preventing violent conflict. Some of the research findings according to Caprioli, M. (2000), regarding gender economic equality include:

- States with higher female participation in the labor force exhibit lower levels of international violence, and are less likely to use military force to resolve international conflict.
- Countries with 10 percent of women in the labor force compared to countries with 40 percent of women in the labor force are nearly 30 times more likely to experience internal conflict.
- If men and women participated equally in the economy, the results would add up to US\$28 trillion, or 26 percent, to annual global GDP by 2025.

Gender-Equal Participation in the Labor Force

According to Caprioli (2000);

- State with higher female participation exhibit lower level of international violence
- Countries with 10% compared with 40% of women in labour force are nearly 30 times more likely to experience internal conflict.
- A 5% increase of women in labour force makes a state nearly 5 times less likely to use military force to resolve international conflict.

Creating A More Equal World

Gender inequalities could undermine the global community's goals on ending poverty, eliminating preventable deaths, curbing insecurity and achieving it's sustainability. But there are clear steps that can help level the playing field. Below are 10 actions to create a more equal world.

1. **Meet All Commitments and Obligations to Human Rights Agreed in International Treaties and Conventions.**
All countries must uphold the rights to work, education and health – including reproductive health.
These rights are articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as other widely agreed human rights documents.
2. **Tear Down Barriers That Prevent Young Women From Accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health Information and Services.**
Sexual and reproductive health care does much more than preserve women's and girls' health. It enables them to become educated, employed and empowered. Yet discriminatory laws, norms and gaps in health care keep too many from receiving these services – or even information about these services.
Obstacles are perhaps highest for adolescents, who can face stigma or even legal barriers when trying to access information, contraceptives and other sexual health care.
3. **Reach the Poorest Women With Essential, Life-Saving Antenatal and Maternal Health Care.**
According to Natalia K (2022). Every day, more than 800 women die giving birth. These women are among the poorest and most vulnerable in the world – and they are just the tip of the iceberg. For every woman who dies of pregnancy-related complications, many more are injured or disabled.

Yet most of these tragedies are entirely preventable, and preventing them is a good investment. Studies show that improving antenatal and maternal health helps to boost economic productivity and lifetime earnings.

4. Meet All Unmet Need for Family Planning, Prioritizing Women in the Poorest 40 Percent of Households.

Access to safe, voluntary family planning is a human right. Yet every year, there are 89 million unintended pregnancies and 48 million abortions in developing countries. Natalia K (2022).

These unintended pregnancies take a massive toll on women's health and futures, not only increasing their risk of maternal injury or death, but also restricting their ability to join or stay in school and the workforce.

5. Provide a Universal Social Protection Floor, Offering Basic Income Security and Covering Essential Services, Including Maternity-Related Benefits and Support.

One way to tackle inequalities is by providing universal social protection. This would mean that everyone has basic income security, such as access to a pension if they are retired or financial support if they are impoverished. Universal social protection could also cover maternity, disability and child benefits.

6. Bolster Services, Such as Childcare, to Enable Women to Enter or Remain in the Paid Labour Force.

Women face a long list of disadvantages in the workplace. They face more obstacles than men to higher-paying jobs, for example. And when women have children, they are likely to encounter a "motherhood penalty," in which they earn less than those without children. Many mothers are pushed out of the labour force entirely because they are not protected from discrimination, they lack maternity leave or they do not have affordable childcare.

7. Adopt Progressive Policies Aimed at Accelerated Income Growth Among the Poorest 40 Percent, Including Through Stepped-Up Human Capital Investments in Girls and Women.

To end extreme poverty, the poorest 40 per cent of people must see faster income growth. This requires major investments in their human capital.

Improving the accessibility and quality of education and health services, particularly for marginalized girls and young women, is an important step towards this goal.

8. Eliminate Obstacles to Girls' Access to Secondary and Higher Education, and to Their Enrolment in Courses in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Despite years of progress, girls are still more likely than boys to be out of school at the primary level. This disparity worsens at the secondary level.

But there are a variety of actions that can improve girls' retention rates, including: eliminating school fees or providing subsidies to poor families; ensuring schools are safe and have separate sanitary facilities for girls; and providing school meals.

Education must also be seen as a path to decent work for all children. This means eliminating gender biases that block women and girls from pursuing so-called STEM jobs – roles in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Women have strikingly low STEM participation, yet many future jobs will be in these field.

9. **Accelerate the Transition from Informal Jobs to Formal, Decent Work – Focusing First on Sectors With Large Concentrations of Poor, Female Workers – And Unblock Women’s Access to Credit And Property Ownership.**
Many of the world’s one billion impoverished people are working informally, as subsistence farmers, domestic servants or day labourers. These jobs provide no benefits, little pay and few, if any, protections.
Transitioning these vulnerable workers to formal jobs with decent pay would improve productivity and strengthen economies. Reducing women’s unpaid caregiving responsibilities – by having men share these roles or by providing care services – would also make a significant difference.
Increasing access to low-cost banking and credit would also help eliminate poverty. Special attention must also be paid to vulnerable women, who may have social or legal obstacles to inheriting or generating wealth.
10. **Work Towards Measuring all Dimensions of Inequality and how They Influence Each Other, and Strengthen Links Between Data and Public Policy.**
Inequalities are poorly understood and often invisible. For example, yawning gaps in wealth and vast gender disparities are hidden in gross domestic product, which fails to account for an estimated \$10 trillion a year in women’s unpaid work, (<https://www.unfpa.org>, 2017).

Other Ways to Fight for Gender Equality

According to Daniele (2017) girls can fight for Gender Equality through these ways:

Girls, Advocate for Yourself and Your Education.

Education is a human right — regardless of your gender, you have a right to an education. According to UNICEF, “When we educate a girl, we not only give her the tools and knowledge to make her own decisions and shape her own future, we also help raise the standard of living of her family and her community.” Educated girls have the skills and knowledge they need to lead more independent lives, which could help them advocate against and avoid child marriage, as well as female genital mutilation. Girls who have little or no education are up to six times more likely to be married as children than girls who have secondary schooling.

Increasing Women participation in Politics:

Decisions are being made for girls and women, but also without them. Women’s political participation and representation is lacking all over the world. North and South America have the highest rate of women’s representation in politics — and it’s still just 25%, according to the UN. In Asia, only 11% of government positions are held by women. According to Oluyemi, (2016). The national average of women’s political participation in Nigeria has remained 6.7 percent in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the Global Average of 22.5 percent. Yet women and girls can be vital to policy making and peace building.

Women Support Network.

Girls and women can be a great resource and support network. New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand credits her female colleagues with some of her success. In an interview with New York Magazine she said she relied on other women in congress for support, and even those who did not support her bill had advice to offer. Sheryl Sandberg, the Chief Operation Officer of Facebook and author of “Lean In,” encourages women to mentor other women. And she says it’s not just about more experienced and established women helping younger women get

their start, but about creating a community. Sandberg says young women should mentor each other too. Even if you are at the same level you have unique experiences and support to offer one another. "When women celebrate each other's accomplishments, they're seen as more professional and accomplished as well," she says. "So supporting other women helps each other, helps women as a group, and also helps the woman that does it."

Boys and men, Speak up on Behalf of Girls and Women — because Girls Should not Have To Fight for Gender Equality Alone.

Gender equality is not just about girls fighting up for what is right, it is also about boys standing up to what is wrong because, as Hillary Clinton famously said, "women's rights are human rights." "Fighting for women's rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating," Emma Watson said when UN Women launched its "He for She" campaign in 2014. But that's not the case, and boys and men have a role to play in the world's struggle for gender equality too. "Being a feminist for me means recognizing that men and women should be, can be, must be equal and secondly, that we still have an awful lot of work to do," Canadian President Justin Trudeau said at the UN. Boys and men can promote gender equality by advocating for girls' education and equal pay, and they can fight against discrimination by speaking up when they witness inappropriate behavior or comments whether that's on the street or in the locker room.

Help Level the Law and Eliminate Gender Discrimination.

All over the world, countries have taken steps to remove gender discriminatory policies from legislation, El Salvador abolished a law allowing men to marry underage girls who they have impregnated. Jordan and Lebanon overturned laws that enabled rapists to avoid punishment if they married their victims.

Tunisia scrapped a law which prohibited Muslim women from marrying outside their faith. But there is still much more to be done to level laws around globally. Though child marriage is illegal in most countries, legal loopholes allow the harmful practice to continue. There are 46 countries that do not have legal protection against domestic violence. In some cases, gender discrimination in legal systems is much more explicit. In Saudi Arabia, women are required to have a male guardian accompany them to do the most basic of tasks, like open a bank account. Laws like these "that discriminate against women and girls, entrench and perpetuate gender inequality," the Executive Director of UN Women has said. "We need to create a change that lasts and breaks the cycle of discrimination for good, so that the progress we have made prevails in future generations."

Conclusion.

Gender inequality has serious and long-lasting consequences for women and other marginalized genders. Exposure to violence, objectification, discrimination and socioeconomic inequality can lead to anxiety depression and low esteem. No meaningful development in any society can be achieved in an atmosphere filled rancor, hostility and bitterness. Moreover, God created all equal, gender inequality is therefore a situation created by man. The inequalities and barriers experienced by women as identified by this work cuts across socio-economic and psychological boundaries. There is need for these barriers to be addressed to ensure sustainable development since there can be no meaningful development without contributions from both genders. In addition, women also have a power to change the world, have a power to give opinions, and to share what they feel about something therefore should be given access to quality education, structures of power in the social, economic and political development of the world in general.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above the following recommendations have been made:

1. The Ministry of women affairs should be empowered by equipping her with all the finances needed and making policies that will enable her empower women.
2. Women should be given a place in the key positions in government, for instance where a man is a president a woman should be the vice president or senate president.
3. In our homes, girls should be allowed to form their characters naturally. Parents should stop buying dolls for girls and footballs and cars for boys as this makes the girls realize at tender age that they have been created to be mother only.
4. Any percentage allotted to women in constitutions should be occupied by women at that rate. Like in Nigerian Constitution thirty percent (30%) allotted to women should indeed be filled by women.
5. Culture/beliefs should not be brought to bear only on the girl-child or women.

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