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A Gender-Sensitivity Approach to Attaining Sustainable Development: A Jurisprudential Perspective

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Abstract:

Women are key agents of sustainable economic development. Yet, they are often faced with denial of certain basic property rights which could have enabled them to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development. Sufficient attention has not been paid to the contribution of women in development. Any attempt to achieve sustainable development without addressing the imposition of inequality and discrimination on girls and woman is like trying to do the impossible. Legal instruments pay insufficient attention to the role of women and gender in the promotion of sustainable development. The exclusion of legal rules in promoting sustainable development makes the realization of economic goals difficult, considering the complex role women and gender play in the promotion of sustainable development. Mainstreaming is the primary methodology for integrating a gender approach into any development effort. This work therefore focuses on how to attain sustainable development by tackling the problem of inequality. The paper examined the evolution of gender in some legal documents adopted at key conferences and also explores the incorporation of gender in Nigeria's development agenda with a view to ensuring the mainstreaming of women into every activity in Nigeria.

Keywords: Gender, Sustainable Development

1. Introduction

Women empowerment in development is claimed to be a major policy issue (Sotomade (2004). Adebisi and Ademola (2014) identified women as key agents of sustainable economic development and rural women in particular, as key targets of empowerment. Klasen (2012) is of the view that their economic roles are central to broad-based economic growth. They make up half of the world's population and they possess invaluable knowledge and expertise. The world is currently in search of a framework of development that will ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all people in the present and future generations. Gender equality and women empowerment is recognized as a cross-cutting issue in sustainable development. Women play a vital role in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the need for full participation of women at all levels of policy making and implementation for biological diversity conservation has been stressed. Despite this, there is gender disparity in policy formulation and development world-wide (Akiyode 2010). In spite of calls for women's full and equal participation at all levels of society, women continue to be marginalized. Mainstreaming gender has been recognized as the primary methodology for integrating a gender approach into any development effort. A need for a renewed vision for sustainable development has also been recognized (Rio + 12). This makes the study on how to integrate gender approach into any development effort imperative.

2. Gender

According to Afonja (2002), gender has remained a burning issue in Nigeria. Gender refers to the social roles, responsibilities and behavior created in our families, societies and our cultures (UNESCO 2006). Gender is also regarded as socially constructed roles and socially acquired behaviours and expectations associated with men and women (World Bank 2001). The Concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics and likely behavior of both men and women. Men are seen as income earners while women are seen as child care-givers. Because these roles are not fixed neither are they biologically determined, these roles can be changed in order to give attention to issues of equity and inequality for both men and women.

Adediji (2011) equates gender equality with gender equity, gender egalitarianism or sexual equality. Gender equality is defined as "leveling the playing ground for girls and women by ensuring that all children have equal opportunity to develop their talents (UNESCO 2008). It is also defined as equal treatment that is different, but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities (ILO, 2000). Bosede (2011) viewed gender as an entity in and of itself that establishes patterns of expectations for everyday life and is built into all major social organizations of society as well as a structural property of society that it

is deeply embedded in society as a basis for stratification, differentiating opportunities and constraints. According to Laolu (2011), the task of building a nation to its' greatest height requires the joint efforts of all in society. This is particularly so with women and girls. Hence this paper is focusing on gender in sustainable development.

3. Evolution of Gender and Environment Discourse

The Rio Declaration made it explicit that women have a role to play in environmental management and development and that their full participation is essential in achieving sustainable development. Women formed one of the nine major groups whose commitment and genuine involvement was deemed critical to the effective implementation of the objectives, policies and implementation of Agenda 21. Renewed effort was therefore pledge to further redouble efforts to address and incorporate gender in addressing these shortcomings by the international community. The Outcome Document which emanated from the Rio+5 Earth Summit, reiterated the need and commitment to promote women's involvement, empowerment, equality and equity in sustainable development and practices. Gender equality featured prominent at the Millennium Development Summit. At the World's Summit on Sustainable Development, commitments were made to ensure that women's empowerment, emancipation and gender equality are integrated in all the activities within Agenda 21. The Plan of Action presents engendered strategy to a reasonable extent, where 45 references were dedicated to women and gender issues across a variety of subjects. There was also a further commitment to make gender a cross-cutting issue in all through 2015. Governments all over the world were called upon to mainstream gender into all environmental policies and programmes, access the effects of policies on women, and integrate gender equality and considerations into their work. The 2005 World Summit championed the integration of gender and emphasized the importance of mainstreaming gender in the areas of education, human rights, rule of law, prevention and resolution of conflicts etc. There was also the adoption of Gender Plan of Action in 2008 to address gender concern from 2008 through 2012. The vital role of women in access and benefit-sharing and affirming the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy making has also been stressed. At Rio+20, recognition was given to gender equality and women empowerment as a cross-cutting issue in sustainable development. A framework for action which includes gender equality and women empowerment was made one of the thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues of the Rio+20, calling on the international community to support and prioritize measures to promote women equality and empowerment across all sectors. Despite this, there is gender disparity in rights which truncates the set of choices available to women in many aspects of life (Omotayo et al 2012). Today, the world is in search of a Post 2015 Development Agenda. It calls to reason that Nigeria should also seek her post 2015 development agenda that offers a better life for current and future generations. The Nigerian nation will do well by adopting a gender-sensitive approach to her post 2015 development agenda.

4. Sustainable Development

The need for sustainable development is widely acknowledged and the notion of sustainable development has become high on the agenda of governments. Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland Report). Sustainable development is a process of change which requires the need for a reorientation of institutions and governance processes (World Conference on Environment and Development). The word "sustainable" is derived from the Latin word "*sus-tenere*" which means to uphold. Sustainability is being invoked in support of numerous political and social agenda. The concept of sustainable development has become one of the general principles of international environmental law. The United Nations Development Programme sees sustainable development as not only generating economic growth, but distributing its benefits equitably, empowering people rather than marginalizing them, giving priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities, and providing for their participation in decisions affecting them. It is a self sustaining development that meets the needs of both present and future generations. The processes through which different socio-economic groups negotiate their development priorities and the future of their families and communities are deeply political. Sustainable development is about reconciling short and long term social economic and environmental goals.

The term "sustainable development" is generally considered to have been coined by the 1987 Brundtland Report which defined it as "development that meets the needs of the present without the compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The term contains within it, two concepts namely:

- i. The concept of 'needs', in particular, the essential needs of the world's poor to which overriding priority must be given;
- ii. The idea of limitation imposed by the state of technology and social organization, on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

The concept of sustainable development comprises of four legal substantive elements and some procedural elements which enhances the pursuit of sustainability. The following are the substantive elements of sustainable development:

1. The preservation natural resources for the benefit of future generations (the principle of intergenerational equity);
2. The exploitation of natural resources in a suitable or prudent manner (the principle of sustainable use);
3. The equitable use of natural resources which requires that the use by one State must take account of the needs of other States (the principle of equitable use or intra-generational equity); and
4. The need to ensure that environmental considerations are integrated into economic and other development plans, programmes and projects and that development needs are taken into account in applying environmental objectives (the principle of integration) (Philippe Sands (2004)

The concept of sustainability centres on the notion of intergenerational and societal justice and of care and precaution in dealing with one another and in dealing with the earth. Sustainable development is focused upon as a means of securing a decent life for everyone as well as protecting the environment.

Achieving sustainable development remains a challenge in Nigeria as a result of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. Meeting current and future demands requires a shift to sustainable consumption patterns, defined¹ as the use of goods and related products which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the lifecycle, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without including the ideals of gender equality into all aspects of development. Unfortunately, women have been recognized as key actors for environmental protection and poverty eradication. Their right to participate in environmental and development policy making process is not given due attention. Development process must be made more gender-responsive and equitable. This will help to address accountability and transparency gaps in environmental and development regimes.

5. Gender Equality and Sustainable Development

Gender inequality remains a crippling force all over the world and Nigeria in particular, preventing women from reaching their true potential and depriving society of the social and environmental benefits that would occur where both men and women are allowed to participate equally. Yet, sustainable consumption cannot be realized without achieving gender equity.

Gender equality and sustainable development are intrinsically linked. Gender equality is important to social, economic and environmental progress. Women and gender play important role in the promotion of environmental protection and the attainment of sustainable development. Sustainable development must promote gender equality if it is to make much impact. The search for a world that will reduce poverty and eliminate inequality that leaves out gender equality will not go far in the absence of considering the place of gender

As earlier pointed out, gender economic role are central to broad-based economic growth. As pointed out by the World Bank 2011, countries with low rate of gender inequality grow faster than those in which inequality rates are high (Rees and Rieziman, 2012). According to Klasen and Lamanna (2009), countries with low rates of gender inequalities in education and employment experience more sustainable growth in terms of longer term structural transformation, industrialization and export oriented economies. Countries with high gender inequalities do not experience broad-based economic development with the required structural transformation (Peters and Klasen (2012).

According to Graca (2012), trying to achieve sustainable development without addressing the stark imposition of inequality and discrimination on girls and woman is like trying to farm without water. Sustainable development requires integrating gender perspectives into all development sectors. Successful future growth will depend to a large extent, on enabling women to play an active role as agents of development. Women with greater control of assets are discovered (Murthi et al (1995) to result in greater nutritional levels health standards and education of their children, with remarkable impact on fertility. Promoting women as agency of growth will go a long way in boosting economic growth and promoting broader development. In their view, Bloom and Williamson (1998), reducing gender gaps in education and employment will help promote demographic transition which is required to boost savings, investments and per-capita incomes. According to Branisa and Zielger (2010), it has also been observed that promoting women's economic and political agency improves governance. Promoting women's economic and political agency promotes broad-based development and improve economic growth and improves governance, with a direct impact on adaptation as this helps to promote pro-development policies (King et al (2009).

Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental to turning bad economies of business as usual approach into a national economy guided by care, precaution, inclusion and justice. Empowering women in particular, has the potential to yield tremendous benefits for households, communities and the global economy. It has been pointed out that social equity, gender equality and environmental justice must form the heart of sustainable development. Nigeria will do well be promoting gender equality at the heart of her development agenda.

The attainment of sustainable development has been hampered for many reasons. Policy trust guiding development in Nigeria is far from being gender sensitive as Nigerian laws do not adequately reflect gender issues. Cultural barriers which marginalize women are not given ample consideration during policy making and implementation, Pervasive inequalities is one of the factors undermining sustainable development in Nigeria. Confusion over the advantages and disadvantages of certain purchases also hinder people from making more sustainable choices. Cost present a major set-back to achieving a global shift to sustainable consumption patterns as products and services with minimum environmental impacts can be as high as double the price of their conventional counterparts. Lack of investment in women and girls which ought to help in building the human capital needed for economic growth is another hindrance to the attainment of sustainable development.

Women's contribution to sustainable development is routinely undervalued and over-looked and this has served as obstacle to sustainable development. Women lack empowerment. Though they perform 66% of all work, women have limited rights when it comes to land ownership in some cultures and they are often excluded from training that would equip them to improve land management skills. The connections between consumption and production and their cumulative environmental impact are serious

obstacles to sustainable development as both consumption and production have diminishing impact on natural resources, endanger biodiversity and contribute significantly to biodiversity.

Development is a process associated with a continuous improvement in the capacity of the people and their society to control and manipulate their physical environment as well as themselves for their own benefits and those of humanity. It is a multidimensional process involving the re-organisation and re-orientation of the entire economic and social systems. Development should lead to improvement in incomes and output and to radical change in institutional, social and administrative structures, popular attitudes, customs and beliefs, as well as reduction in inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. All hands should be on deck to do away with all forms of gender disparity and to promote gender equality so as to experience sustainable development in Nigeria.

6. A Framework for a Sustainable Development in Nigeria

6.1. Women's Property Rights

Many women depend on men and they lack a voice in the decision making process as a result of lack of equal rights and in some cases, they suffer many incidence of domestic violence. Land rights will afford women better participation in household decision making. Concrete social change can only take place when all members of the society have equal opportunities and rights.

6.2. A Gender-Sensitive Growth Strategy

Women need to be supported in their dual roles as care-givers and active economic agents. A sustainable development approach requires gender sensitive growth strategies that invests in women and empower them for more effective contribution to economic development. Strategies that increase women's bargaining power have been observed by the European Commission (2011) to promote growth at the same time. The promotion of women focused social protection programmes will make more resources available for poor women for overall growth and development. A gender-sensitive growth strategy is said (Klasen (2006) to include giving priority to overcoming gender gaps in education, reducing gender gaps in access to employment and labour market opportunities, improving women's access to land, credit, input, technologies and formal sector employment and developing growth strategies that promote female economic opportunities Blaalden and Bhanu (1999).

Growth must be sustainable in an economic, social, environmental and inclusive manner. Promoting women's economic opportunities provides an excellent opportunity to further the sustainability and inclusiveness of the growth agenda. It can use the growth momentum to provide more economic opportunities for women and it can be used to promote a structural transformation that will heavily depend on women's role in industrialization.

6.3. Addressing Consumption and Production Patterns

Adopting sustainable consumption patterns offers a path towards protecting the environment, improving quality of life for billions of people and increasing gender equity. Increasing levels of consumption and production and related pressures on the environment are impeding sustainability as consumption and production processes generate wastes. As is well known, greenhouse gas emission are linked to production and consumption patterns. Consumption patterns needs to be addressed in the journey towards sustainable development. Nigeria must make it a priority to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions at both ends of consumption and production continuum.

Women are more inclined than men to favour sustainability as a lifestyle as they are often motivated by their reproductive role and the impact their choice may have on their families long-term well-being (Johnson-Latham and Gerd 2007). They spend more time seeking information on sustainable consumption and lifestyle alternatives.

6.4. The Promotion of Green Economy

Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication is as an important tool for achieving sustainable development. Nigeria needs to expedite action to arrest unsustainable patterns of production and consumption in all spheres of activities so as to address environmental sustainability. This will help to promote conservation and sustainable use of resources, regenerate natural resources and promote sustained and equitable growth. The building of green economy should rest on the pillars of gender equity, poverty alleviation and technological and social systems which reduce environmental impacts of production and consumptions. Women should be made to play a central role in the building of green economy.

6.5. Financing Gender-Equity Sustainable Development

Financing resources for gender equality is crucial in achieving the urgent and visionary goals and political commitments on sustainable development. Achieving gender equality requires significant financial resources. Sufficient financial benchmarks must be instituted with comprehensive tracking mechanisms and procedures for the expenditure on gender equality and women empowerment. More participatory and gender-responsive decision making processes, financing mechanism and allocation frameworks which includes and address women as key stakeholder groups should be developed.

6.6. Gender Equality

Investing in women and girls education and health yield the highest returns of all development investment and increase household incomes. Nigeria should make it a priority to ensure gender equality in order to improve the economic status of women, promote equal

participation of women in decision making and leadership, improve equitable health and education outcomes, and ensure that gender equality is advanced in many areas of the Nigerian economy.

6.6.1. Advocacy to End Gender Discrimination

There are long established discrimination against girls and women as reflected in unfair gender division. There should be advocacy to put an end to gender discrimination at the level of families and communities and all government departments.

6.7. Investment in the Girl Child and Women

Investing in woman and girls will assist in enhancing gender equality as well as promote cleaner and more equitable development. Education is the bedrock of progress. In a society where girls education is undervalued, such a society will be robbed of equal contributions of females. The promotion of the empowerment of women and girls will go a long way in achieving the goals of any development agenda. Women and girls must be invested upon specially in the area of education and other forms of empowerment, and conferred with equal land rights and all barriers to sustainable development must be removed.

6.8. Enhanced Woman Participation Approach

The voices and active participation of women are crucial in the march towards a new development agenda. This is especially so in the area of conflict resolution process. Any conflict resolution process that play down on the benefits of women's wisdom and insights will not be able to achieve much. Any agenda intended to better the lot of Nigerians should include the contribution of women if it is to be successful

7. Conclusion

The world is currently working on how to create a sustainable development framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It takes a healthy environment to create a world where all can fully enjoy their fundamental human rights. Without equality development will fail and falter. All must have the freedom to opportunities to pursue their own paths in a world defined equality, social responsibility and environmental integrity. Women and girls must be at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda for it to achieve the Nigeria of our dream and in particular, towards becoming one of the best twenty economies of the world in the year 2020. Women are key agents of sustainable economic development. Their economic roles are central to broad-based economic growth. Pervasive gender inequalities is one of the factors undermining sustainable development in Nigeria. Women are key agents of sustainable economic development. They should be made to play a central role in the building of green economy which reduce environmental impacts of production and consumptions. Women cannot be left out in the match towards a green economy. Women are key economic actors and agents of sustainable development. They play dual roles as care-givers and active economic agents. Achieving gender equality requires significant financial resources. Financing mechanism and allocation frameworks is important to address women because they are a key stakeholder group. A sustainable development approach requires gender sensitive growth strategies that invests in women and empower them for more effective contribution to economic development. Measures to promote women equality and empowerment across all sectors must be given priority in Nigeria in order to experience sustainable development.

Recommendations

Gender equality must be well integrated into sustainable development policies, strategies and action plans which relates to environmental management if Nigeria is to realize sustainable environmental governance.

The linkages between gender equality and sustainable development must be acknowledged and acted upon in order to create a society that maintains and regenerates the environment and provides for all Nigerians with the kind of lives present and future Nigerians deserves.

Women and gender provisions should be made central in Nigeria's environmental regime, with the inclusion of specific provisions and marching commitments for their practical implementation. Nigeria's environmental regime should uphold the full and equal participation and leadership of women in all areas of practice. Stronger legal provisions on measures to promote women's equality and empowerment must be given priority across all sectors. Gender equality should be at the core of a commitment for a set of new sustainable development goals to be developed in Nigeria as the world is on the march towards a post 2015 development agenda.

Promoting women as agency of growth will go a long way in boosting economic growth and promoting broader development. Reducing gender gaps in education and employment will help promote demographic transition which is required to boost savings, investments and per-capita income. Economic and political agency which improves governance could be attained in Nigeria through the promotion of women economic and political agency.

Green goods should be manufactured in substantial quantities for sizeable markets and they should receive subsidy parity with their conventional counterparts. Women should be educated and empowered for action in the building of green economy. To this end, human and women's rights should be made a cornerstone of all sustainable development programmes and agreements and goals in Nigeria.

Policy makers in Nigeria should take gender into account when designing policies for sustainable development. Gender should be mainstreamed in policy formulation processes in Nigeria.

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