

Effective Implementation of Gender and Development Policy in a Public Tertiary Health Institution in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria

Ann Amaka Maduka

Department Of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The global introduction of the millennium Development Goals has drawn National attentions to pursuing gender and development policies, geared towards achieving gender equality. The Nigerian government keyed into this policy, replaced the erstwhile National Policy on women adopted in the year 2000 with National gender policy in 2006. The 2006 Gender and Development Policy was reviewed in Nigeria; which led to the 2021-2026 gender and development policy. The 2021-2026 policy draws from the 2006 National Gender and development Policy whose overall goal was to provide 'strategic policy guidance for mainstreaming gender at all levels as well as address the inequalities that exist in the socio-economic sphere, and combat all forms of violence against women and girls, among other things. The policy goal is aimed at eliminating cultural, religious gender based biases and harmful cultural and religious practices which tend to reproduce inequalities in gender roles relations in the Nigerian society and thereby giving a subordinate status to women compared to men. Hence, development opportunities continue to elude women since the policy failed to challenge the structure which reproduces gender inequality and overall disempowerment of women. This study therefore examined effective implementation of gender and development policy in public health institutions in Nigeria. It is clear that implementation of gender and development policy is not effective and contrary to expectation. With the new and revised policy in place, the Nigerian government can learn from the previous policies and ensure that there is clear tracking and monitoring of the impact of each of the objectives so as to fully do away with gender inequality in the country; recommendations were also made.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, gender and development policy is one of the global issues that have drawn the attention of government, policy makers, researchers among other stakeholders. Gender and development policy is a development strategy critical to poverty eradication, improved health outcomes and living standards, and protection of the fundamental human rights of women. According to Njide and Olu (2017), empowering women, giving them a voice in decision-making and policy implementation, and ensuring their participation in economic activity and income generation could connote increased poverty alleviation efforts, improved standard of living, good governance, wealth creation and employment generation

In Europe, Gender and development is one of the prerequisites of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Many African Countries have incorporated gender and development policy in their economic and national development plans and strategies (Kufu and Jacobs, 2014). In tandem with best global practices, the Nigerian government in 2006 launched the National Gender and Development Policy following an extensive research and consultation process involving various government and public sector development stakeholders and partners. The National Gender and development Policy provides guidelines for mainstreaming gender in various sectors of the economy with the overall goal of reducing gender inequalities and enhancing participation of women, men, girls and boys in socio-economic and political development (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2021).

To achieve this goal, the 2006 Gender and Development Policy was reviewed in Nigeria; which led to the 2021-2026 gender and development policy. The 2021-2026 policy draws from the 2006 National Gender and development Policy whose overall goal was to provide 'strategic policy guidance for mainstreaming gender at

all levels as well as address the inequalities that exist in the socio-economic sphere, and combat all forms of violence against women and girls, among other things. It further draws from regional and international instruments to which Nigeria is a party. The Nigerian revised National Gender Policy (2021-2026) commits Nigeria to a bolder and more ambitious vision for gender equality and the empowerment of all children, adolescents, and women. Unlike the 2006 National Gender Policy that was conceptualized on institutional engagement, the 2021-2026 revised National Gender Policy places practical and strategic gender needs at the heart of both the policy and Nigeria's common objective of achieving social inclusion and promoting shared values regardless of ethnicity, sex, or other differences. Alongside equity and empowerment, these have become the vanguards of national life and pro-poor development aspirations. Furthermore, the reasoning/grounds for the revised National Gender Policy is that it affirms the importance of gender equality, not only as a fundamental human right but also as essential to poverty reduction and improved living standards, sustainable economic growth, effective and accountable governance (Nwankwo, 2017). Gender equality is crucial for socio-economic development as well as the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the Agenda 2063

The persistence of gender inequalities and under representation of women in decision making positions at all levels continues to provide the need for a gender and development policy to provide the policy framework for addressing them. The overall goal of the policy is "to build a just society devoid of discrimination, where the needs and concerns of women, men, girls, and boys are mainstreamed equitably into all sectors of national development (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2021). The National Gender and Development Policy are linked to relevant regional and international instruments and protocols. At the national level, among others, the Policy has strong linkages to several policies and instruments such as the Nigerian Constitution, education policy, reproduction health policy, the agriculture policy, the environmental policy, national youth policy

Several international conferences and United Nations conventions raised the tempo for Governments and State Parties to promote gender equity and equality. Showing its political will and commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women, the Government of Nigeria ratified and is a signatory to several regional and international instruments and commitments. The most notable instruments and commitments are: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, and the Beijing Platform for Action (BpfA), New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), AU Solemn Declaration for Gender Equality, African Protocol on People's Rights, and the Rights of Women (APRRW), International Conference on Population Development Plan of Action (ICPD PoA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and importantly, the Nigerian Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (2017-2020). All these are human rights instruments for the advancement of women and children. The international and regional instruments provide useful reference material for the development of national instruments particularly the Nigerian Constitution which upholds the principle of gender equality and women's rights related national laws on gender equality; such policy on gender and development should be effectively implemented in public health tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

However, literatures (Wilson, 2017, Nwankwo, 2017) have shown that gender and development policy has failed to achieve most of its desired outcome as stated in the implementation plan in some public tertiary institutions in Nigeria. There has been notable improvement in increasing the number of women entrepreneurs compared to men and in number laws and penal code protecting women's right in line with the policy expected outcome. On the other hand, it seems that there is need for more concerted action in line with the policy to close the gender gaps in the political representation of women at the national and state levels. There is also need for the government to address gender inequality in public sector employment of graduates from public health tertiary institutions. There is need for the government to make provision for campaign action on effective implementation of gender and development policy in public health institutions in Nigeria.

Conceptualizing Gender

Gender and gender related issues are relatively new areas that are generating interest among researchers. This has given rise to various definitions of the term, gender. Bryce (2011) defined gender in its narrowest sense as a socially constructed sex, be it female or male. Bruce and Afolabi (2012) stated that the term gender has been variously used to refer to a collection of the characteristics that are culturally associated with maleness and

femaleness. Similarly, Becker (2016) defines gender as a system of social organization with a set of behavioural prescriptions that are believed to follow from biological sex characteristics. Corroborating Becker's definition, Haig (2010) defines gender as "the range of physical, mental and behavioural characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between masculinity and femininity." According to Ayodeji (2010), gender is the socially constructed ways of being male or female, man or woman.

This differentiation between male and female, man and woman is based on their roles and expectations in the society. So, gender is a socially created concept anchored on division of labour and differences in behavior pattern between male and female, men and women in any given society. As socially created concept, Ugboaja and Uzoka (2011) note that gender is the society constructed roles, responsibilities ascribed to males and females by different societies. These roles are socially constructed and socially learned behavior and expectations associated with males and females (Okeke, 2017). In all, gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman and man in different contexts.

Objectives of Gender and Development Policy in Nigeria

The broad objectives of the revised policy are developed based on the overall goal, the guiding principles, lessons from achievements, and challenges faced over the period by women and men, boys and girls which culminated by the revision of the 2006 National Gender Policy. Therefore, the policy seeks to achieve the following broad objectives:

- i. Bridge gender/social inclusion gaps and achieve parity in all spheres of life.
- ii. Protect women's human rights and mitigate sexual and gender-based violence through appropriate buffers and related services.
- iii. Explore and fully harness women's human capital assets as a growth driver for national development through women's economic empowerment.
- iv. Advance women's participation and representation in leadership and governance.
- v. Support women and girls' education, lifelong health, survival, and sustainable development.
- vi. Ensure that gender equity concerns are integrated into social protection, and complex humanitarian actions, legislations, and policies
- vii. Ensure that the socially excluded groups (e.g. persons with disabilities, the elderly, and the poor) are mainstreamed in development practice.

The overarching goal of the policy flowing from above is thus: to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment concerns into the national development process in order to improve the social, legal, civic, political, economic, and cultural conditions of the people of Nigeria; particularly women and men, boys and girls, elderly, poor and persons with disabilities in an appreciable manner as required by national and international frameworks.

Structure of the Policy

The revised policy seeks to address the systemic nature of gender mainstreaming and the need for both traditional and non-traditional gender sectors to embrace gender transformation and the changes which accompany this. Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (2021), posited that the National Gender and Development Policy aims to institute a paradigm shift in national policy-making and implementation from a gender sensitive position that presumes gender equality and equity, to a gender-aware position which acknowledges that barriers exist which prevents equal access and thus creates inequality

Structurally, the revised policy is premised on the following key underpinning principles, values and philosophies:

1. The promotion and protection of women's rights, provision of social buffers and safety nets, social justice, and equity are critical to national cohesion, growth, and stability
2. The uniqueness of the needs of women and girls, compared to those of men and boys, are not homogeneous, originate from varying circumstances, and therefore demand tailored policy responses at sector and sub-sector levels;
3. The gender policy is central to the achievement of overall national development goals, objectives, and targets on many fronts and from both the macro to the micro-economic levels as gender equality is a driver of growth and good governance;
4. The cooperative interaction of all stakeholders, including government, private sector, civil society organizations, traditional and religious leaders, community-based organizations, and development partners at all levels is required to drive effective implementation of the policy;
5. The implementation of the policy shall build on existing structures, and draw on international policy frameworks, protocols, experiences, and practices including affirmative action interventions focused on women, recognizing them as a corrective measure to bridge gaps in opportunities and access to resources; and
6. Gender analysis is an integral part and essential component of all policy articulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
7. Gender mainstreaming shall be the core strategy for achieving the policy objectives and targets.

The policy adopts the gender mainstreaming strategy to draw attention to how women, men, girls, and boys are influenced and affected by policy decisions and programme executions and the need for a two-pronged approach to redressing gender inequalities. Gender mainstreaming is the globally recognized strategy for successfully advancing gender equality and equity in society

Implementation of Gender and Development Policy in Public Health Institutions

The Millennium Development Goals to which the Federal Government of Nigeria is a signatory, which aims to significantly reduce poverty, inequality and disease, is supposed to be achieved by 2015 and the Strategic Results Framework presents an opportunity to contribute to the achievement of these goals. According Nwankwo (2017), the Strategic Results Framework demonstrates how to translate these commitments into concrete action, investment and hopefully result into positive changes in women's lives in Nigeria.

Implementing the gender and development policy would require strategic partnerships-within government (the executive arm) and among the different levels of government (Federal, States and Local) and with the other key tiers- Legislative and Judiciary. Partnerships would also need to be broadened to include women organizations within the civil society, UN agencies, bilateral and multi lateral donors supporting the government of Nigeria to implement commitments to gender equality (Jacobs, 2017). Already there exist very many indicators of progress from such partnerships- collaboration on promoting women's political participation, collective support to the passing of critical laws in states' Houses of Assemblies, girls' education initiatives, advocacy on harmful traditional practices and emerging partnerships to deal with gender and sexual based violence.

In Nigeria, donor governments and partners, including the UN, are required to support national priorities with a focus on national ownership, harmonization and alignment, mutual accountability and results. This mean the Federal Government of Nigeria would need to define more concretely its results, to enable partners support the implementation. The implementation of gender and development therefore is one of such frameworks that would shape the partnership between Nigeria and her development partners in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, to which the development partners have also made commitments to. While it has been recognized that there is a need for partnerships with new constituencies, including working with men on women's human rights and in particular on gender and sexual based violence etc, gender equality however remain the key responsibility of the Federal Republic of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs

and counterparts in the States and local governments in Nigeria.

The implementation of the National Gender Policy will lead to a need for technical and policy advice from technical national institutions like the National Centre for Women in Development, the Bureau of Statistics and key research institutions, including Universities, to move forward on gender equality. Recognition of the diversities and multiplicity of actions required across a spectrum of actors as well as a dearth of required expertise to move the process in a systematic manner. Unavailability of tools, data and information to stimulate evidence based planning, advocacy and programming are additional challenges that constrain gender mainstreaming at the different tiers and levels of governance, and in different sectors and situations.

The Strategic Results Framework focuses on the restructuring and strengthening of the National Centre for Women in Development as the key institution responsible for providing critical analysis, baseline indicators and providing status of progress to guide the implementation of the National Gender Policy, and more importantly in ensuring that Nigeria becomes an equitable society. The Centre would be critical for the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs as the driver of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Nigeria. These two institutions would need to be strengthened and resources invested in them to enable them meet the challenges of implementing the Strategic Results Framework. The strengthening will include adequate resourcing, positioning within government, placement of highly technical staff etc. Other critical research institutions like the Bureau of Statistics, Universities etc. will be required to develop gender policies and management systems to engender their processes (recruitment, training etc) and more importantly, their research work that would provide added value to the achievement of the objectives of the National Gender Policy in terms of changing perceptions, trend gender analysis on critical areas like poverty, agriculture, HIV/AIDS, etc.

Effectiveness in the Implementation of gender and Development Policy in Public health Institutions

To evaluate the effectiveness of the gender and development policy, there is need to compare the implementation of the policy with the expected outcomes. According to Uwakwe (2018), there have not been any changes in the curricula of public tertiary health institutions integrating the changing roles of men and women in society. Also, the National Orientation Agency' strategic action plan 2021 – 2026 made no provision for campaign actions on gender awareness and women empowerment. However, there has been improvement in locally produced home videos on gender awareness and gender equality in the country.

In assessing the specification of the gender policy implementation plan, there is no new constitution that incorporates the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination. The government is also yet to ensure that gender equality in representation is integrated within the federal character principles. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, between 2010 and 2015, women only accounted for 38 per cent and 42 per cent of state and federal government workers, respectively. Furthermore, there is still no pilot budget at the federal and state level on gender budgeting. However, some notable improvements include the increase in the number of laws and penal code protecting women's rights and federal government reforms to ensure gender justice, such as the 2015 Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act. The policy implementation plan focused on increasing the number of women entrepreneurs. This has been largely successful given the growth in women entrepreneurship in Nigeria. The latest Global Entrepreneurship Monitor annual survey shows women are at the forefront of start-up in Nigeria. According to the survey, 41 percent of the start-ups in Nigeria are founded and operated by women compared to 39 per cent start-ups founded and operated by men. This is in line with the policy objective of empowering women to engage in economic activity and to contribute to national economic development.

In terms of promotion of national accountability to gender equality, the policy implementation plan aims to achieve 30 percent representation of women in governance at the national and state levels. However, this has not been the case; the executive arm of government has not complied with the policy. In the Federal Executive Council (FEC), only 7 out of 44 ministers are women (16.3 per cent). Furthermore, in the current National Assembly, women make up 7.3 per cent of the senate and 3.1 per cent of the House of Representatives. No state governor is a woman. This limited participation of women in the political development of Nigeria highlights the need for inclusion and empowerment of women, especially when we consider that women comprise 49.5 per cent of the country's total population. Thus, there is a need for more advocacy for government adherence to the 2006 National Gender Policy, especially in the political empowerment of women.

Measures to enhance the implementation of gender and development policy in public health institutions

The researcher is interested in finding out the extent to which these strategies have tended to facilitate the success or otherwise of the gender equality in Nigeria. The paper is also aimed at expanding the scope of the strategies, with a view to providing a very rewarding analysis.

Politics and decision-making reforms:

Omonubi-McDonnell (2003) making a case for gender inequality in politics and decision making in Nigeria. He opines that: Politically, Nigerian women are a negligible and under mined force, with little political involvement. Economically, they constitute the majority of the peasant labour force in the agricultural sector, while most of the others occupy the bottom of the occupational ladder and consequence of the unequal status between men and women is a high level of economic and political powerlessness among women, powerlessness in turn retard development at any level politically, economically and socially. This is so, according to Aina (1998), Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society where men dominate all spheres of women's lives. Women are regarded as being inferior to men and therefore not capable and suitable for political leadership. As a result of its societal negative orientation in societal processes especially politics. Their participation in Nigeria politics has women in the public sphere and especially their participation in politics, which is often seen as male domain.

In the submission to the above, the core hindrance in their participation in active politics and decision making include general apathy to politics amongst women; religious and cultural biases against women in politics, lack of resources to compete with men in politics; low membership of women in political parties. They only serve as supporters for male to acquire political positions. Discouraged from participation in the electoral process because of malpractices, unfavourable political environment characterized by political violence. Therefore, the policy is faced with the challenge of the continuing marginalization of women in Nigerian politics. Development requires good governance, which is likely to provide both men and women folk equal opportunity in decision-making and policy implementation. Legislative reforms to guarantee gender justice and respect for human rights. The Nigerian legal system is based on a tripartite system of laws (statutory, customary and the Sharia) which is sometimes contradictory. Thus has made it difficult to fulfill one of the basic stipulations of Nigerian constitution which requires that all citizens be treated as equal under the Law.

According to George-Genyi, (2008), despite a general commitment to the principle of nondiscrimination as enshrined in section 2 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. There is short fall of the desired result of giving males and females equal opportunities to advance socially, physically, politically and economically, evidences abound that several negative aspects of gender relations, such as gender based division of labour, disparities between males and females, access to power and resources and gender biases in rights and entitlements remain pervasive in Nigeria. The provision in the Nigeria constitution that guarantees equality between the sex, and fundamental human rights, practically women rights are infringed upon at different levels of their lives.

However, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), established in 1999, has not adequately in its capacity, compel key public institutions to promote fundamental human rights and freedoms. The most serious violations of women's rights are those associated with unwritten traditional norms and practices of Nigeria's numerous and diverse ethnic groups. Take for instance most common widowhood rites, inheritance rights, the land tenure, female genital mutilation/ female genital circumcision (FGM/FMC) and early marriages. This affects the health and well-being of Nigerian women and girls and further undermines their development and progress.

Economic reforms and women empowerment

Sustained economic growth and development is essential to poverty reduction and women' empowerment is a strategic and effective entry point to alleviate poverty. Women are worse hit by economic transition processes, mainly because they lack access to critical resources: education, capital, labour, entrepreneurial skills and equally lack control over the use of their valuable time. Ominode (1996), stressed that economic empowerments are a major component of women's total empowerment and liberation; because political, social and cultural

empowerment are often wide and incomplete without access and control over resources. In addition, the Various poverty alleviation strategies of successive Nigerian governments to promote the status of men and women economically, have failed to attract noticeable economic transformation for women because they remain focused at the micro level. There is widespread poverty, some of the challenges are unemployment, malnutrition, illiteracy, law status of women, environmental degradation and limited access to social and health services, including reproductive health services. However, there has being programmes like better life for rural women, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) many of these programmes failed to attract noticeable economic transformation that is beneficial to women because they remained at micro level framework

CONCLUSION

The study investigated effective implementation of gender and development policy in public health institutions in Nigeria. It is clear that implementation of gender and development policy is not effective and contrary to expectation. With the new and revised policy in place, the Nigerian government can learn from the previous policies and ensure that there is clear tracking and monitoring of the impact of each of the objectives so as to fully do away with gender inequality in the country. Thus, the major challenge will be how to move from policy prescription projected in this policy document to the actualization of the policy frameworks. The success of the National Gender and Development Policy, technically rest on how operators of the policy are able to follow due process, the use of gender mainstreaming as tool for institutionalizing change in gender power role relations. There is need for government to challenge existing structures, particularly those structures that perpetrate gender inequality and gender injustice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations were made

1. There will be need for massive resourcing to the National Gender Machinery and the other structures under the Gender Management System.
2. Organizational structure should be configured to ensure maximum effectiveness in providing leadership in the implementation of the Gender and Development Policy. This would ensure that they are able to respond to those directly implementing at the different levels.
3. There should be high level of awareness about the existence of the policy, its set targets. This calls for commitment of significant resources to raising awareness on the existence of the policy and its purpose among government, employees, private institutions and members of the public in general.
4. To all the stakeholders and institutions saddled with the responsibilities and implementation of the National Gender Policy, the provisions of the constitution that guarantee equality of all citizens are strictly adhere to and those that promote discrimination on the basis of gender and culture be removed from the constitution. Therefore, there must be an institution to regulate, monitor and control gender role relations in the public and private sector.
5. There should be equity and equality in employment opportunities and elimination of all discriminatory and abusive practices (on the grounds of sex, race, ethnicity, class, religion, age, disability or marital status) against the employment of women in the public and private sectors of the economy.

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