

Gender-Sensitive Projects for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment

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ABSTRACT Being one of the contemporary and topical but controversial social problems amidst social inquiry in patriarchal Nigeria, gender has both *objective condition* and *subjective definition* in development theories and practices. This paper submits that the concept of 'Gender' within African developmental context aligns with discrimination and derogation. Series of approaches and projects have surfaced in Nigeria with the view to combat the threat of gender along the *pathways* to socio-economic and political development, yet the phenomenon persists. The paper specifically examines the nature and extent of *genderism* and fictitious and factual forces weaved around gendered and engendered development programmes in Nigeria. It draws attention to *Nigeria's underdevelopmental epidemiology* via *gender epistemology*. Theoretically, the paper argues that the spirit of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' are inadequate as separate sceptres for achieving the object of gender-sensitive development in Nigeria, indeed, Africa. Against this backdrop, 'nomothetic' method cannot solely drive Nigeria's development out of its morass in the wake of gender issues. Therefore, the paper recommends that a down-to-earth application of gender-neutrality to all stages of the life cycle of development project. *Gender-free integrated participatory development approach* and 'idiographic' method are suggested as the *theoretical and methodical tour de force* for Nigeria's sustainability in development.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the current Nigeria's *nascent democracy* on 29th May 1999, series of Gender-Sensitive Projects¹ championed by women have surfaced within the country's socio-cultural, educational, economic and political terrains. The emerging gender-oriented movements signaled a new dawn in the history of Nigeria's *capacity building*, *gender issues* and *sustainable development*. Therefore, these women-centred activities sent new lease of life to teeming Nigerian populace particularly womenfolk in south-east and south-west (Mba, 1997). As pathways to development, different efforts have been steered by governmental and non-governmental bodies with the view to arresting *gender-blind policies*, *planning*, *programmes* and *projects*. Meanwhile, *individual genderism*² and *institutional genderism*³ pervaded colonial and postcolonial Nigeria, and indeed Africa, perhaps due to the influence of patriarchy, foreign and indigenous African religions, and most importantly western culture. Some elements of *matriarchy* cohabited with patriarchy in traditional African settings, for example some Igbo communities (Amadiume, 1995) while, Yakurr communities, in Nigeria have *matrilineal* and *double-lineal descents* (Obono, 2001).

The traditional gender approach has been

women oriented. Ironically, *women empowerment* is not the only concern of gender-initiatives but issues bothering on *discrimination*, *poverty*, *oppression*, *violation of rights*, *denial of privileges*, *degrading womanhood practices*, *child labour*, *child early marriage*, *child maltreatment*, *reproductive health*, *human trafficking*, *religious bigotry*, *HIV/AIDS*, and many more *social ills* that threaten development are composites of petty gendered packages. This is simply for the fact that, gender subject stands to have *trickle-down effects* upon other sectors of human development. Neglecting *underdevelopment epidemiology*⁴ and its associated problems for *gendered social structure* could *boomerang* and afflict *global social equilibrium*. After all, human society is *sui generis*⁵ in nature and *systemic* in process in other words, *organismic analogy*⁶ in nurture so must sustainable human development be along gender-responsive projects.

Marginalisation of women in the scheme of things remains glaring. Few instances, that pictured women as participants in the social processes of life still associated them with *inconsequential roles* being *second* if, not *third class citizens*. Often it is posited that *human rights are women rights* (Pietila, 2002) and possibly *women's rights are human rights* however; the likes of these aphorisms earn less recognition in patriarchy-oriented human

development-driven decision-making and implementation. Of course, patriarchy accounts for the neglect of this watch word. Within the families, kinfolks, clans, lineages, communities and society at large second fiddle characterises the statuses of women, mothers, wives, daughters, ladies and girls in most parts of Nigeria. Therefore, gender-responsive projects continue to crop up day-in-day out amidst Nigeria's sustainable development. Need arises to examine the interface between gender and development. Perfecting this age long scholastic exercise requires critical conceptualisation of both gender and development. Snyder and Tadesse (1995: 14) conceived 'Gender' as 'a social construct that asserts that the expectations and responsibilities of men and women are not always biologically determined' while, Isamah (2002: 123) sees development as the quantitative and qualitative transformation of societies from one stage to another. According to him '...development process has as its overriding objectives the enhancement of the quality of people's lives and livelihoods'. In this context development refers to gradual evolvement and advancement of all socio-cultural, political, economic and other institutional spheres of society for the benefit of humanity.

The phenomenon of sustainable development has gone beyond the shore of *women-centred* movement. Realisation of development especially, sustainable development via gender-initiatives also lurked behind objective verification and assessment of all local varieties of social and human stratification, such as age, caste, class, culture, education, ethnicity, race, sexuality, religion among others (Akerkar, 2001). Aside from the application of *ideological and repressive state apparatuses* (Althusser, 1972) in emasculating *women's movements*, the women themselves consciously or unconsciously aid the glorification of patriarchy in several ways, especially by commercialising their activities at the detriment of gender-responsive projects in development. Ideological and practical disagreement between men and women, within men and among women along gender-initiative programmes threaten development. The pattern and process in which women have been trading off social movements' ideologies and their inalienable rights in the face of men, fathers, husbands, sons and boys is disheartened. The common sayings that *oko nii olori aya*⁷

(*husband is the head of the wife*); *obirin l'esin*⁸(*a woman does not have a religion*); *esin oko nii esin aya*⁹(*it is the husband religion that is the woman's religion*); *nkan tii oko ba fen ni kii aya ba fe*¹⁰(*it is what the husband wants that a woman should want*), in Yorubaland, are clientalistic-oriented and conduit of humiliation, deprivation, exploitation, and in short human underdevelopment. The cultural practices of wives bearing their husbands' names, calling their husbands daddies, kneeling before them as courtesies, serving as their washing, cleaning, cooking machines and domestic servants when reverse can not be the case, are against moves towards the establishment of androgynous society and sustainable development. Neopatrimonial ethos¹¹ and manifestations are inherent in female-folk amidst network of interactions with their counterparts, yet women's movements, such as National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS) and Better Life Programme (BLP) claimed to be pursuing gender-responsive programmes in Nigeria's human development (Tripp, 2001). Some women's unwillingness to vote for fellow female aspirants during elections substantiates one of the myths behind ideological and practical failure of gender-responsive projects built along participatory politics in Nigeria. A cursory look at the engagement of women in dirtiest routines, especially cleaning of surroundings and washing of toilets being used and littered by male staff and students, including visitors in most educational institutions in the southern Nigeria, specifically University system demonstrates the servitude nature of women and their relegation to the background.

Most gender-initiative projects, especially women-driven programmes are chasing shadows of social reality at the expense of real social facts and subsequently exalting patriarchy and its attendant consequences. Nevertheless, gender-responsive projects have contributed meaningfully in human development in Nigeria but its general pattern and process is fluffy. The projects' ideological mechanisms, operational manuals and modes are indistinct, coupled with the fact that their activities, achievements and prospects are fuzzy. The pertinent question that this paper considers is; *what should be the role stakeholders in human development with special reference to gender epistemology*¹² and gender-sensitive projects?

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES: GENDER, SOCIAL PROBLEM, DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The late 1980s marked the introductory era of gender into social parlance and practice. It appears at both national and international spheres in the wake of development-initiatives through various agencies, especially feminist writers, women's movements, NGOs, NGDOs, CBOs among others. It is a replacement for 'Women and Development' (WAD) and subsequently a second generation concept for equity (Rathberger, 1991). Of course, association of gender with equity depicts subjective definition in gender epistemology. This is because evenhandedness, impartiality, fairness, justice, fair play and equality are the appropriate plethora adjectives for equity instead of gender. This definition expresses one of the traits of social problems. 'Gender refers to socially constructed roles of women and men ascribed to them on the basis of their sex, whereas the term sex refers to biological and physical characteristics' (UN, 1999a). The UN World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (1999b) refers to gender 'as the social meanings given to biological sex differences' as well as 'ideological and cultural construct' that is also reflected in influencing material practices. The UN (1999a) further asserts '...gender is a social stratifier, and in this sense it is similar to other stratifiers such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and age'. In Udegbe (1999: 3) views gender is a 'stimulus that frames expectations, evaluations and response patterns of individuals'. Snyder and Tedasse (1995: 14) indicated that gender is a social construct which emphasizes that roles and responsibilities of men and women in development process are not always determined by biology but also cultural principles and practices. They posited that gender as a concept 'easily accommodates race, class, ethnicity, and male-female relationship' and its theory span 'from household to the international economy'.

Since a large proportion of womenfolk perceived gender as being intimidating to their personal, social, political, economic and overall human development, the phenomenon characterises objective conditions. Thus it fulfills another pre-requisite of social problem. Amadiume (1995) conceives gender in terms of biological determinism and ideological deter-

minism and thus related the former to western European societies and the latter is identified with African societies. Hence, Africans accord more recognition to the significance of females in development. She argued further that failure of most gender-initiatives in the continent is driven from some feminists' conceptualisation of sex role within the realm of western world. Omololu (1997) suggests that gender is not far from ideological construct that is susceptible to manipulation by both men and women, since its biological determination becomes analytically less substantial in present-day society, and the distinctions in sex roles are becoming progressively hazier. The perception of gender as social problem, especially among women is provoked by a widespread discriminatory philosophies and practices that majority of female population is exposed to in patriarchal social structure globally (Pietila, 2002). The political marginalization (Toyo, 2003), economic disempowerment (Garba, 1997), educational deprivation (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1997), socio-cultural deficit (Olojede, 2000) and religious subservience being suffered by women portrayed them as sidelined sect; minority group (Wirth, in Haralambos, 2000) in Nigeria and consequently defined them as objects and subjects of social problem. Louis Wirth sees minority group as component of human society which is identified:

'...as having lower social status, possessing less power and prestige, and exercising fewer rights than the dominant groups of the society. They are often singled out and subjected to discriminatory attitudes and behaviour because of real or alleged physical, cultural or social differences'

Operational conception of gender is therefore circumstantial in content and context as it is derived from individual and group's perception and gradually translated to institutional sanctioning through patriarchal displays. Thus Pietila (2002: 69) indicates that gender mainstreaming is not only a new formula but also extended far above seeking for 'equality' in development agenda. It kicked against 'malestreaming', that is, integration of women into men's world. The phenomenon required women to 'Speak in their own voice, on the basis of their own experiences and values, and eventually transform patriarchal structures'. Therefore, being one of the contemporary and topical but controversial social problems amidst social inquiry in patriarchal Nigeria, gender has both objective and subjective

definition in development theories and practices.

Nwabueze (1992) refers to social problem as existing socio-structural strains within social system and it remains inimical to the gratification of normative values and needs of the group. Going by this, gender (masculinity, femininity, sexual traits) is a social problem for depicting a remarkable difference between social ideals and realities, to the extent that it is dysfunctional to some social groups and societies at large. Thus gender gave birth to *ambivalent sexism*, *hostile sexism* and *benevolent sexism* (Glick and Fiske, 1996).

Looking at Merton and Nisbet (1966) explanation of social problem as being institutional, normative and human relationship in process, one may be tempted to integrate this conception in capturing the phenomenon of gender. It is however right to suggest that, gender has the following characteristics; social recognisability, objective condition, subjective definition, collective perception, decision-makers labeling, susceptibility to solution and man-made invention. Drawing upon this, one may be prompt to contend that the trend of gender and indeed, sexual division of labour in sustainable development generally has their ideal location within the realm of social problems as Becker (1966: 23) posits:

Every social problem thus consists of an objective condition and a subjective definition.

The objective condition is a verifiable situation which can be checked as to existence and magnitude... by impartial and trained observers... The subjective definition is the

awareness of certain individuals that the condition is a threat to certain cherished values.

This objective condition and subjective definition of social problem, lead to a wide array of ontological, epistemological and methodical interventions for the incidence and prevalence of gendered practices in Nigeria and the world in general. In this wise, dripping effects of genderism upon other elements of social antagonisms and stratifications; age, caste, class, education, ethnic group, race, religious denomination and many more worth-noting in mainstreaming gender, participation and development (Akerkar, 2001). After all, development itself exists within the framework of human thought as a relative reality, multi-faceted and down to earth social processes of life. Development's area of coverage is compre-

hensive for spanning from individual, family, kinship, lineage, community, society to global levels. Olutayo and Bankole (2002: 119) observed that development involves process of change upon socio-political environment of society, that is, 'what is central to the development of any nation is the availability of means and forces of production which are owned by the indigenous members of the society and who control the use of these means'. Rodney (1972: 9) posits, 'Development in human society is many-sided processes.' In line with this emerged Nigeria's five main national development objectives. According to the Second National Development Plan of 1970-74, the country aims to build; a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1970). The foregoing objectives of the national development plan presuppose that human development is all-embracing and pervasive as it welcomes contributions of every diverse element in the country without mincing matter on sexual differences in role allocation, and role performance. Definition of sustainable development is highly demanding at this juncture. WCED⁴³ (1987: 43) conceived it as '...development which meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. It further states that 'sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life'. Drawing upon this, Adams (1990 in Mitlin, 1992) sees sustainable development as 'intensely synthetic,' concept whose 'second characteristic is the apparent ease with which different ideas about development are grafted on'. Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler, and Wieringa (1995: 133) argued that 'any definition of sustainable development depends, of course, upon the definition of development, and what it is that is to be sustained, that is, the continued high level of consumptions or the fulfillment of basic needs'. Meanwhile Chambers (1987) views it as ensuring of sustainable livelihoods for all people including women and children. To him *bottom-up model* is central to the sustainability of development. Basically, sustainable development entails building upon the past for better present without jeopardising brighter best future.

Inferring from this, every emerging element of gender-initiative stands to greatly or lightly, directly or indirectly instill social change for sustainable human development. Therefore, genderism is to gender, what ageism, ethno-centrism, racism, sexism, is to age, ethnic group, race and sex. Gender is neither a thinking, sensible, harmonious and progressive machinery nor a suitable development tool. It is discriminatory and derogatory in its social ontology. If class can not hold brief for economic equity and race can not step into the shoes of skin-neutrality how will gender be equal to objectivity?

Nature and Extent of Gender-Sensitive Projects and Women's Movements in Nigeria

Nigeria is blessed with a large number of women's association right from the pre-colonial, during the colonial and the post-colonial eras. Generally speaking, colonial and postcolonial Africa deprived women the chance of being involved in decision making and implementation processes (Bryson, 1981; Rodney, 1972) although the active predispositions of Aba women¹⁴ of 1929, Moremi¹⁵ movements, Abeokuta women association among others impacted upon sustainable development in colonial Nigeria. Therefore, crumb of gender-initiative projects characterised colonial Nigeria, especially peasant and market women's movements of 1920s (Young, 2001) who fought against colonialism and its practices. Tripp (2001) recognises independent and pro-regime women's organisations in Nigeria, while Soetan (1995) identifies four categories of women's associations; Cooperative Societies, Thrift and Credit Societies, Better Life-Assisted and Market Associations, though along democratic and economic empowerment in Nigeria. *Class conscious elitist groups, public-sponsored groups, Non-Governmental Organisations and ideological-driven groups* characterised the contemporary Nigerian women's initiatives (Omololu, 1997) and their aspirations inclined towards overall human development. Typically, *male-dominated initiatives, female-dominated initiatives, unisex initiatives*, exemplified Nigeria's gender-responsive projects. Therefore, chains of principles and practices were instigated by different *gender-initiatives* against patriarchal social structure. Specifically, *First Ladyism* becomes inherent in Nigeria's *feminocracy*¹⁶ or '*femocracy*' with the resurgence

of multifarious petty gender projects in the contemporary era (Ibrahim, 2004). The simple fact is that most of these gender-responsive projects have demonstrated their relevance in the sustainability of Nigeria's development over the years, although they are not free from some infirmities in the course of their exercise. After all, some of these advocates of feminine perspectives, have been establishing social crusades against the *spirit of sexual division of labour, female genital mutilation, men-centred political participation, dehumanisation and domestication of women, feminisation of poverty* among others in Nigeria. This really explains the physical, cultural, psychological, structural and even social abuses that male-dominate decision making and implementation process have been instituting against womenfolk in Nigeria for years.

Nevertheless, women themselves are having itching palms, while wrestling with patriarchal and unjust socio-structural philosophies and predispositions in the face of sustainable human development. The appearance of *radical, liberal, cultural, psycho-analytical*, including *first wave, second wave and third wave feminist movements* (Ritzer, 1996) in Nigeria, and elsewhere in the world demonstrated that tensions were tailored around *gender-responsive projects*, and among feminist participatory researchers and practitioners in the area of human development. At the international realm, initiation of Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD) at varying historical epoch of feminist movements attests to the ideological morass and instability in the first and second phases of International Gender-Responsive Projects (Rathgeber, 1990). The equation of *women with weakness*, and *poor with ignorance* by Gender and Development (GAD) and its introduction of *power and difference* in a bid to confront and transform inequalities provoked contradictions and dilemmas amidst mainstreaming gender and development (Cornwall, 2001). The *differences between men and women, within men and women* along the axis of age, caste, class, culture, education, ethnicity, race, religion, and sexuality hardly receive the favour of *gender approach* as separate sceptre for development. Little honour is given to the expression of divergent choices, faces, experiences and voices in engendering development. Frequent application of external concepts, models and theories to indigenous African gender-sensitive projects in development

process seems exasperating in *gender epistemology*.

In narrowing down the discourse of gender-initiatives to Nigeria, Olojede, (2000) discusses autochthonous and heterochthonous women's organisations as the broad categories of women's interest groups. She further divides the former into four namely; professional/occupational, activist, research driven and religious women's groups. Agbese (2000) reveals that duplications of women's movements and associations both government and non-government owned ones typified Nigeria's gender-initiative projects. According to Agbese (2000) day-in-day out more women groups emerge in Nigeria. Similarly, Ibrahim (2004) said apart from federal, state and local varieties of first ladyistic projects, NGOs that are gender-motivated flooded Nigerian society. Meanwhile, Trager (2001) discovers Friendly Mothers' Society, Ijesha Women's Association, Ijesha Young Women's Progressive, Ijesha Ladies' Improvement Society, Owodunni Women's Group, Iloko Women's Forum and Council of Iloko Women as some of the existing gender-initiative projects in Nigeria. She exposes that their impact upon the development of the community at micro-level can never be over-emphasized. In a related development Agina-Ude (2003: 103) sheds light on the reason behind the proliferations of gender-responsive projects in Nigeria. She intimates that: *'The Third and Fourth World Conferences on Women in 1985 and 1995 inspired the growth of women oriented non-governmental organisations and community based organisations'*

The foregoing exemplified unnecessary proliferation of gender social movements in Nigeria. Thus Nigerian communities are highly choked up with countless diversity of women's associations whose ideological goals and strategies remained blurred. Garba (1997) informs that two main women-dominated groups prevailed in Nigeria amidst engineering women empowerment; Nigeria's branches of International Women Organisations and Domestic-Initiated Women Organisations. She further classified the latter into; professional groups, activists women groups, research-driven groups and women's religious groups.

Toyo (2003) however stresses that most First Ladyistic gender-responsive projects constitute avenue for mismanaging and misappropriating public funds yet, they provide a good breeding

ground for women's enlightenment and political participatory predispositions in Nigeria. Some gender-responsive projects are women-centred, especially Women in Nigeria (WIN), Better Life Programme (BLP), Family Support Programme (FSP), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA), whereas Child Care Trust, Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) and Gede Foundation: AIDS and Infectious Diseases Research Institute, Mrs Jamila Abubakar wife of the current Nigeria's Vice President's petty project are unisex and non-gendered (Agina-Ude, 2003; Ibrahim, 2004). Nonetheless, the existence of the foregoing in Nigeria really speeds up human development at a greater or lesser dimension. It is therefore right to argue at this juncture that, series of gender-responsive projects, specifically women-oriented initiatives have demonstrated their relevance in championing Nigeria's socio-economic and political developments.

Patterns and Processes of Operations of Gender-Sensitive Projects in Nigeria's Development

For years, women and indeed humans are endowed with wide range of techniques and mechanisms for processing social reality. Tripp (2001) contends that most African women's movements with a bias in Nigeria's National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS) and Better Life for Rural Women Programme (BLP) have had the cause to employ state-affiliated patronage networks and clientelistic relations as their weapons for driving machinery of gender-initiatives towards sustainable development while, independent women's organisations such as, Women in Nigeria (WIN) embraced radical approach in pressing for gender-responsive programmes. WIN distanced itself from pro-government stance and its allies hence criticising every post-independence government for throwing the country into confusion, crisis and conflict along religious, ethnic, regional, partisan politics (Abdullah, 1995; Olojede, 2000; Imam, 1996; Shettima, 1995). Ibrahim (2004) adds that all First Ladyistic gender-initiatives existed not only to deradicalise women's movements but also to project the images of ruling leaders. As such they ran short of concise and objective ideolo-

gical mechanics and mechanisms channeled towards rapid social change and human development in Nigeria. Omololu (1997: 67-68) contends that as part of Nigerian women's movements practices they always advanced series of efforts to 'wield power' without preparedness to lose any of their female identities hence could not generate guiding ideological apparatus for their movements on one hand and sustainable development on the other. He observes:

'...unlike pre-independence women activities, in which the principal actors, leaders and followers alike, were largely united in their aims, aspirations and purposes, thereby they were not subjected to much normative contradictions; contemporary women's movement is characterised by contradictions in purpose and directions, conflict in ideology and normative expectations, and confusions as to what their moral social and religious roles are and should be'.

Possibly, in reaction to the above Olojede (2000) underscores eight patterns and processes that often mirror the strategic operation of Nigerian women's organisations. According to her, conventional pressure group techniques (contacting public officials and press, electoral engagement, legal action, lobbying), unconventional pressure group techniques (demonstrations, protests, symbolic political action, violence), intra-group mobilisation (awareness packages, consciousness rising), and established alternative service providers' institutions (banking, education, health, legal aid, protection, and transport related services). Others are separatists' networking (self-centred community services, blocking spread of male-dominated values), caucus (fight for women in industrial, occupational, political establishments), coalition strategy (forming joint-movement in women's interests) and hosting and attending internal and international congresses (for women's problems discourse). These operational strategies being employed by women have been assisting them in articulating their choices, experiences, voices, and practices in Nigeria. As the pathways to sustainable development in Nigeria, women-proned petty projects and practices, through their operational manuals and modes impacted upon human development. However, some of these approaches are inimical to rapid social changes and thereby constitute livewire of Nigeria's

underdevelopmental epidemiology. Drawing on this social pathological dispositions of Nigerian women's movements, Abdullah (1995: 223) sounds a note of warning:

'...if the Nigerian movement believes in emancipation, it must divorce itself from the grip of the state, develop a women platform to negotiate with and form coalitions with trade unions, human rights and democratic movements'.

The likes of these arguments influenced Toyo (2003) and Agina-Ude (2003) to be calling on Nigerian women to come out of their shells in millions and flex political muscles with men in electioneering. Through this proposal, more female aspirants with better winning chances stand to be born and political culture of Nigerian women in the aspects of supporting male candidatures against their female friends, clapping and singing, dinning and wining, sleeping and waking all in supports of male politicians, and indeed patriarchal politics will become stillbirth. Even the call in Beijing Conference (Pietila 2002) and Lagos Declaration (Agina-Ude, 2003) for 30% representation of women in most decision-making, decision-implementation, and decision-monitoring and evaluation bodies at both private and public establishments expatiate upon the mythological movements of women in development, seeing that they possessed equal if not greater population strength with or against men. In pointing at women's practices that often frustrate gender-responsive projects, Agina-Ude (2003: 85) cites Hon. (Mrs) Fadahunsi of Federal House of Representative (Ekiti Constituency) as saying:

'In the first instance, many women don't even know what is at stake, to have a woman coming out to represent them. They think politics is a man's world. My first challenge therefore was to involve women. You will realize that there are usually more women than men during campaigns and voting, but they are always clapping and singing to support male politicians. They don't see the need to be part of the system'

In examining the myth and reality of Nigerian women's movements, Toyo (1997) indicated that the stylish romance of NCWS with government is detrimental to achieving gender-equity and sustainable human development. As the arrow-head of other gender-responsive projects in the country, NCWS has lost its autonomy to government over the years via collection of official subvention and thereby jeopardized the social grenades of its progenitors. She further

decried absence of unity of purpose within and among women's movements in Nigeria including those that claimed to be pursuing same interests.

Basically, quite number of principles and practices constrained women in achieving the goal of gender-responsive projects in Nigeria and subsequently militating against their contribution to changing and developing social structure right from family, kin group, community, societal, national to global levels. Women's desperation to be attached to at least a man and her belief to embrace her husband's family name is like a ribbon and identity of oppression. How many husbands will be crying, dying and yarning to adopt their wives appellations as part of their nomenclatures? Don't they (women and wives) know that most of these husbands would not hesitate to divorce them on a slight misunderstanding or light provocation and look for their replacement with same but perceived better women? Are women not sensitive to some men's views that women are commodities that could be bought and discarded at will?

Activities of Women's Movements in Sustaining Human Development in Nigeria

Every existing but objective gender-initiative operates to influence all stages of community development, inquiry, planning, implementation, adjustment and evaluation (Jibowo, 1992) for sustainable human development. On a large scale Rathgeber (1990) examines the activities of Women in Development as anti-poverty movements. According to her WID's area of coverage is not only narrow compared to GAD's but also concentrates on small-scale class differentials in gender-neutral campaign. Contrary to this, GAD has been operating along the path of holistic approach to social relations of women and men in production and distribution process. On this note Akanji (1997) relates that most of international agencies such as USAID, World Bank, FAO, have been championing the course of mainstreaming women in small scale agriculture. From this, most of Nigeria's women-driven programmes with their '*soft-options*' practices shouldered the responsibilities of reinforcing the *traditional familial role* of women under the aegis of propagating the course of sustainable development. Thus they are operating 'under the same notion of What women are currently doing and not what they

ought to be doing or what they did best in the past' argued Akanji (1997: 238). This means that Nigerian gender-responsive projects attune their activities towards *old stocks* which seem to depict *vicious circle of archaic ideas*. Garba (1997) argues that women have had the course of participating in policy formulation, formation, implementation, control and evaluation in the light of Nigeria's development via Nigerian Council of Women Societies (NCWS), Lioness Club of Nigeria, Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN), Nigerian Association of Women in Business (NAWIB), Nigerian Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Society of Women Accountants of Nigeria (SWAN), Women in Nigeria (WIN) and Women's Research and Documentation Centre (WORDOC). In recounting the activities of Better Life for Rural Women Programme, Toyo (2003) suggests that it raised special awareness among both men and women concerning the relevance of women roles and responsibilities in national development. BLP did not only influence women's appearance in national dailies, but also provoked the emergence of protagonist and antagonist women-centred organisations. Ibrahim (2004: 56) reveals that:

'...those First Ladies who encourage the promotion of women into positions of power, no matter how dubious their motives, are providing access to political skills and resources that will enable the pool of women politicians to become more competitive in the cut-and-thrust of campaigning.'

He however, reiterated that of all Nigeria's First Ladyistic projects, it is only Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) that has not gone into oblivion. WRAPA's impact is still being felt by oppressed Nigerian women today. Ibrahim added that advocacy programmes, training and research upon affirmative action have been undertaken by numerous gender activists; Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), Community Partners for Development (CPD), Federation of International Women Lawyers (FIDA), Gender and Development Action (GADA), Open Society for West Africa (OSIWA) to mention but a few in Nigeria. Meanwhile, Abdullah (1995) argued for the influence of WIN in exacerbating women's political enfranchisement in Nigeria, especially in North. Pereira (1997)

informs that government is in the habit of employing the politics and policies of divide and rule against women's movements, especially NCWS often serves as formal instrument of oppressing and abusing women's rights and privileges. In addition, government uses it not only to marginalise women but also for advancing patriarchy hence; she quotes a female official of NCWS saying:

There is no need... for a woman to be liberated from a man, the man owns the government. There is a need for woman to fully participate in government but we need some level of understanding. We (the NCWS) are not there to take away what they have but we are there to assist them in doing WHATEVER they do better.

The activities of religious inclined gender-initiatives such as, Young Christian Association of Nigeria (YWCA), St. Andrew's Women Organisation, Federation of Muslim women's Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN) and Muslim Sisters' Organisations of Nigeria, amongst others, in establishment gender-equity are not far from chasing the shadow of doctrinal reality. This is so because inequality and subservience of women to men are dully sanctioned in some scriptures. Are these bodies not aware of verses in Holy Bible and Glorious Qur'an that institutionalized gender-inequity? For instance the Bible reads:

'...I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow you shall bring forth children, and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you (Genesis 3: 16)'.

'...Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5: 22-23)'.

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but be in a silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve (1 Timothy 2: 11-13)'.

Similarly the Qur'an has some quotes such as:

'Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the others and because they spend their wealth to maintain them...' (4: 34)

'A male shall inherit twice as much as a female...' (4: 10)

Critical perusal of the foregoing demonstrates

institutional genderism; still women that try to champion gender-balanced movements are composite of religious bodies. What a sheer contradiction in women's fight for equity with men in scheme of things! It can be summed that women's religious movements are only trying to make mole out of mountain in pressing for gender-evenhandedness. A great deal of concerted efforts need to be initiated by both men and women alike in order thereby to castrate patriarchy and gendered social structure for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Theoretical Underpinnings and Gender-Sensitive Projects for Sustainable Development

Numerous theoretical postulations have been applied to the explanation of gender-sensitive projects towards developmental sustainability, yet human underdevelopment thrives, strives and lives. Therefore, participatory development approach, social movement theories and empowerment strategy have been triangulated herein. The philosophy behinds this triangulation expresses the idea of idiographic methodology instead of nomothetic approach as the practicable instrument with which sustainable development can be attained in Nigeria. This is simply for the fact that, *idiographicism*¹⁷ deals with the application of distinct strategy to different social groups or societies based upon their peculiar socio-cultural, political, economic and environmental structures. However, both *social movement and empowerment existed to strengthen integrative participatory development approach*.

Participatory Development Approach and Gender-Sensitive Projects

Cornwall (2001) sees participation as a catalyst of warm sense of togetherness, common purpose and mutual understanding, while *beneficiary participation* symbolises management mechanism with which some of the crisis of planning and implementation in development are shifted to the recipients for enhancing project effectiveness. According to Akerkar (2001) participatory development approach is advanced not for a single element in development process but rather for the benefit of all the marginalised groups in human development exercise. It expresses the idea of engaging diverse *minority*

groups in development project without preference to gender, age, class, race, ethnic, religion, caste, sex and other forms of social strata. Situating this approach within *community development*, all stakeholders in programme and project need to be fully integrated into *enquiry, planning, implementation, adjustment, and evaluation* stages (Jibowo, 1992) in the life-cycle of development project. Consequently, Guijt and Cornwall, (1995) argued for *Participatory Rural Appraisal* (PRA) in the face of sustaining human development. The PRA which draws its inspiration from Freire's critical thinking and sensibility proposes active involvement of all *stakeholders, researchers, development practitioners, local people and policy-makers* in all phases of development initiative.

This raises the question of *collective role* and *shared responsibility* as the mainstay of sustainable human development. Writing within this premise, recognises *dramaturgical analogy* (Goffman, 1996 in Ritzer,) as it demonstrates the essence of *interdependence* and *role playing* among individuals in the social world. Being a prototype of interpretive understanding of social action (Bendix, 1960) dramaturgy is designed out of Shakespeare's play titled, *As You Like It*. The quote reads:

All the World is a stage
And all the men and women merely players
They have their exits and their entrances
And one man in his time plays many parts
Act 2, Scene 7

The relevance of role theoretical exposition is being emphasized in the above quotation of Shakespeare. Drawing on the foregoing, human society exemplified by Nigeria depicts a network of interrelated positions, statuses, and expectations within which its members collectively operate for sustainable development. Theoretically, local varieties of modernisation and dependency theories, in other words, *top-down approach* and *bottom-up approach*, especially *welfare, equity, anti-poverty, efficiency, empowerment* and even *human resource development approaches* (Snyder and Tedasse, 1995) have been interfaced with gender-initiative projects still women's participation and essence in decision-making and implementation are sidelined, if not completely removed from development process. Thus *participatory development* methodology is advanced as the *theoretical tour de force* for integrating gender-neutrality into sustainable development.

Social Movement Theories and Gender-Sensitive Projects

Smelser's (1962) general theory of collective action and its assumptions (structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of a generalised belief, precipitating factor, mobilisation for action and social control) are good building blocks for the formation of women's movements in Nigeria. Structural imbalances and injustice gradually exposed women and indeed feminists to engage in *self-reflective communication* and *we-group interpretation* of the dialectical conflict between the *social ideal* and *social reality* of Nigerian social structures. Following this, feminists, both men and women nursed the ambition of breaking away from patriarchal principles and practices. The fourth assumption revolves around *precipitating factor*. This means that a set of events ought to occur as propelling force to the commencement of social movement. The emergence of gender-responsive projects and movements in Nigeria have an interlocking spur with the growth and spread of generalised beliefs among the feminists and their supporters that women constituted marginalised group within patriarchal framework. The socio-cultural, economic and political practices designed and packaged in male-dominated Nigeria served as precipitating factors for gender-responsive projects and women's movements.

According to Gamson (1975) the emergence of social movement did not depend only on the existence of structural strains but also the accessibility of intending members to necessary resources with which their common goals could be accomplished. Therefore, *strains* and *resources* are parts of the instrumental factors behind the formation of goal-oriented social movements. To this end, Gamson (1975) fashioned his *resource-mobilisation theory*. Drawing from this, it is right to posit that *perceived level of structural strain* and *perceived level of accessibility to requisite resources* circumscribed the incidence and prevalence of gender-sensitive projects in Nigeria so also women's movements. After all, resource is the bed-rock with which every goal-oriented association stand to achieve its objectives. More so, Tilly's (1978) protest theory whose edifice involves *organisation, mobilisation, common interests and opportunity* also underpinned the commencement of gender-sensitive projects via women's

movements in Nigeria. This is so because, the possibility of gender-responsive projects largely depends on organisation of human persons who have common interests, mobilisation of both material and non-material resources and existing opportunities.

Empowerment Strategies and Gender-Sensitive Projects

Empowerment Approach as tagged by Moser (1989) challenged both local and global patriarchal power structures. In reference to women Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler, and Wieringa (1995) contended that empowerment entails affording people, especially women strategic opportunity to access and control their bodies and resources towards environmental and sustainable development. They further said:

Women's empowerment is seen as a cost-effective strategy to achieve

sustainable development, not as an end in itself – on women's own terms (P.145).

Snyder and Tadesse (1995) argued that empowerment relates to participation, creation of self-reliance, ensuring targeted measures via women's autonomous bodies. The approach seriously challenged the prevailing development paradigms, *modernisation and top-down approaches* and subsequently questioned if women intend to be incorporated into societal systemic decay that is oppressing men and women. Just as *top-down* and *bottom-up* approaches existed in developmental studies so also *exogenous* and *endogenous* empowerment approaches nailed their relevance in gender-initiative projects and indeed human development process. Citing Nigerian women as a case, Garba (1997: 247) reveals that social, cultural, economic and historical processes often undermined their empowerment slots in the stage of development. She argues that '*In Nigeria as in many parts of the world, women do not enjoy the same privileges, opportunities, power, influence and recognition, as men*'.

Not until then, exogenous empowerment emphasises all interest-holders in social phenomenon to participate and subsequently influence decision making process as it affects their lives consciously and unconsciously. This supports the idea of external individuals and groups influencing the empowerment of disempowered people along the corridor of

sustainable human development. On the contrary, exogenous empowerment expresses capability building activity among disempowered beings with the view to prepare them for full-fledged participation in decision making and implementation processes of development. It presupposes that external individuals and groups stand to facilitate disempowered people by fortifying them with the necessary mechanics required for empowerment tussles. Karl (1995) identifies four stages through which empowerment could be effectively enforced; awareness stage, capacity building and skills development stage, participation and greater control in decision making stage, and action for change stage. However, Garba (1997) adds capacity and skill assessment stage in between Karl's stage 1 and 2, and evaluation stage as the last stage. This led to the formation of six-stage hierarchical empowerment process as opposed to Karl's four-stages of empowerment. According to Development Alternatives for Women in the New Era (DAWN) mobilisation, raising consciousness, accessibility to resources (land, credit, education and training) are good facilities for empowering oppressed people, especially women and poor souls (in Sen and Grown, 1987).

CONCLUSION

Sustainability of Nigeria's human development requires sheer engagement of all and sundry in the lifecycle of developmental project without according preference to socio-culturally oriented sexual division of labour. Arguing for women-centred initiatives as the only tool for development is less forceful. The philosophy of either exogenous or endogenous women empowerment is inadequate to drive Nigeria along the gallery of sustainable development but rather androgynous principles and predispositions across board of social structure. To this end, machinery of sustainable development that is weaved around only women activism might invite goal displacement in real gender-initiative projects. Gender-initiatives ought to be perceived, mobilised, funded, supported, treated, monitored and evaluated as holistic sceptre for human development. *Mainstreaming gender and participatory methodology* is succour for rapid human development.

Addressing gender issue requires addressing the whole bottlenecks hamstringing global

peace, security and progress amidst sustainable development. Therefore, neither nomothetic approach nor modernisation method is adequate as the sole messiah of Nigeria's development but down-to-earth application of idiographic mechanism and gender-neutrality to all stages of the life-cycle of development projects. This calls for the consideration of *gender-free integrated participatory development strategy as theoretical and methodical tour de force* for Nigeria's sustainability in human development.

NOTES

- 1 Gender-sensitive projects are well designed and packaged programmes built around sex differences for sustainable development.
- 2 It is sheer emotional and personal expression of discriminatory attitudes against opposite sex.
- 3 This deals with systematic process by which some segment of human figures are sexually marginalised through a recognised rules and regulations set out by the social group which they claimed to be part, that is, an official sanctioning of some people along sex differences.
- 4 Underdevelopment epidemiology is a field that depicts the process through which indicators of human growth and development spread across all elements social institutions, sub-systems and society at large. It examines the courses, causes, consequences and control of the distribution of peoples' backwardness in comfortability.
- 5 Sui generis is a house-hold terminology used in right-realism, especially among Durkheimian sociologists. The philosophy behind the concept is that human society is greater than its components. Therefore, parts or units constituted cluster that gave birth to the whole.
- 6 Organismic analogy is often associated with Comtean sociologists. The idea signal the real beginning of scientific status of sociology, as it presupposes that society can be treated just as an organism in relation to its lifecycle..
- 7 It is a Yoruba aphorism for Husband is the head; leader of wife.
- 8 Obirin l'esin is one of the common sayings in Yoruba. It means women have no freedom to choice religion except the one being chosen and practiced by their husbands.
- 9 Esin oko nii esin aya simply means religion of the husband must be the religion of the wife. This complements the assumption of Obirin l'esin.
- 10 This represents one of the cultural assumptions projecting women's relegation to the background in Yorubaland. The postulate, nkan tii oko ba fen ii kii aya ba fe can be interpreted to mean it is what the husband desires that the wife desires for him. Why it is that reverse is not always the case?
- 11 Neopatrimonial ethos delineates the deradicalised guiding principles of most women's movements; especially government initiated gender-sensitive projects in sustainable development. According to Tripp (2001) African women's movements with a bias to Uganda and Nigeria's NCWS and Better Life Programme are playing servitude to government against the solid and common interests of females in development agenda.
- 12 Gender epistemology is a scientific study of the process and pattern of acquisition, dissection, analysis, and utilization of knowledge relating to sex differences in a bid to establish androgyny.
- 13 This refers to World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). The commission devises an internationally recognised conception of sustainable development which won the favour of many multi-national organisations.
- 14 It is an active women's movement that operated against increment of head tax among the Igbos during the Nigeria's colonial era, specifically in 1929.
- 15 Moremi is a Yoruba legendary woman warrior that led and sponsored a powerful revolt against colonial authority in the southwestern Nigeria.
- 16 Feminocracy is the government of the few females within general government by the few females for the few females that operates, develops and feeds fat on most females' rights and privileges.

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