

Feminization of Underdevelopment in Nigeria: Some Theoretical Issues

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ABSTRACT This paper attempts to critically and theoretically examine the socio-economic and political situations of women in an underdeveloped patriarchal society like Nigeria and argued that the situation has not changed for the better for many women. More women than men suffer from underdevelopment. When we consider gender inequality in development, the gender sensitive policies formulated to tackle this problem appeared to have produced little or no impact on many of the Nigerian women. The paper concludes by stressing that for women to be made veritable instrument for development, the age long cultural practices such as early marriage, occupational gender segregation, sex preference and female genital mutilation that inhibit women's contribution to development must be adequately addressed by government and non- governmental organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Women and men in different societies of the world have been socially predisposed to undergo divergent experiences in development due to gender norms and ageless culture of patriarchy. Thus, in many societies like Nigeria, women are taught to be submissive and manage to survive in a male dominated society, while men learn to accept challenges and adapt to changing situations. Gender norms for males are built around power and control, independence, violence, risk taking, early sexual activity and having multiple sexual partners, while gender norms for women include submissiveness, dependence, virginity until marriage and faithfulness during marriage (Aina, 1998; Odejide, 1998; Boender et al., 2004).

Discriminatory socialization of women and men into unequal gender power relationship is the root cause of feminization of underdevelopment (the tendency for women to be in disadvantaged situations that inhibit their living standards and contributions to development). This trend has resulted into development of different values for men and women with subordination of the latter in many societies like Nigeria. However, many government and international organizations endorsed various policies in support of women empowerment but such policies have not resulted in substantial reduction in women underdevelopment in many societies like Nigeria where men and women could contribute to development and be affected by it differently. Development centres on positive social change and improvement in

living standard of people. It is measured by different socio-economic and political variables such as population growth, economic growth measured in terms of per capita income and Gross National Product (GNP), adult literacy, life expectancy, satisfaction from income and political stability. In these variables, women are either not given adequate opportunities to contribute to development or their contributions are seldom counted in the determination of development index, which is often used to group societies into developed and underdeveloped axis (Odebiyi and Aina, 1998).

Considering the neo-liberal ideology, underdevelopment pervades different societies with serious implications for many women, who suffer unnecessary discrimination, marginalization and deprivation (Aina, 1998). For instance, about fifty percent of the Nigerian Population is made up of women with unequal access to life supporting opportunities such as education, income and health (Obanya, 2003; National Population Commission, 1994). In Nigeria, a woman's income is barely 42 percent of a man's income on average and female economic activities represent 56 percent of those of men. Thus for every woman engaged in economic activities there are at least two men (Obanya, 2003; UNDP, 2003). This implies that more women than men are not gainfully employed. However, few women that are employed are usually paid lower than their male counterparts in the same professions (Odejide, 1998).

Thus, if a society is characterized by unemployment, gender discrimination both in

occupation and salary for men and women such a society could be said to be underdeveloped and many women thereof are more likely to suffer from economic hardships than their male counterparts, hence feminization of underdevelopment. Thus, feminization of underdevelopment can be buttressed further through women marginalization in development indicators such as industrialization, per capita income, Gross National Product, adult literacy, income, life chances, health and political stability. The United Nations Development Programme and Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund) have used low ranking based on the aforementioned development indicators as measures of underdevelopment worldwide. However, it is unfortunate that many women still fall short of considerations at different fronts of development.

Metrics of Underdevelopment

The concept of metrics has to do with measurement of observable phenomena, with the aid of designated parameters. Metrics are measurement tools, which, precisely could be descriptive and/or analytical (Matanmi, 2005: 59). Thus, the concept of underdevelopment is elaborated here. Underdevelopment is a transpose of development and can be measured through low outcomes of development indicators. In the early stage of sociology of development, economic factors such as level of industrialization, per capita income and Gross National Product (GDP) were employed to measure development. The World Bank (cited by Kirby et al., 1997) used per capita income and GNP as measures of development and divided different countries of the world into five categories such as follows: low-income countries (India, China, Mozambique) with below \$545; lower-middle income countries (Mexico, Poland, Morocco) with \$545-\$2200; middle-upper income countries (Algeria, South Africa, South Korea) with \$2200-\$6000; high income countries (Germany, Saudi Arabia, Japan) with more than \$6000 and non reporting countries. In the World Bank classification, Nigeria was ranked among the low-income countries and this ranking has implications for the Nigerian women. However, considering the cultural background and population structure of different countries like China per capita income and GNP may not show the true picture of development in a country.

Consequent upon the recognition of the flaws in economic factors for measuring development, alternative measures such as social indicators and political factors were considered more appropriate because they include literacy level, democracy and social security. Under social indicators, two measures of development are widely used. These are the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) developed by Morris (1979) and Human Development Index (HDI) developed by the United Nations (1992). The PQLI measures three variables (life expectancy, infant mortality and adult literacy) and provides an index based on an average of all the indicators for each country. Similarly, the HDI considers life expectancy, educational attainment, and satisfaction derived from income. By averaging the three variables, an HDI value from 0 to 1 is calculated. For instance, the United Nations Development Programme (1992) presented Canada with the highest HDI at 0.982 and Guinea the lowest at 0.052. Nigeria was also ranked low based on the HDI (Kirby, 1997). The peculiarity of the Nigerian case can be understood in terms of relatively high maternal mortality and low enrolment of women in schools especially in northern Nigeria where many women enter their first marriages when they are supposed to be in schools.

In contrast, different measures of development may produce different results in different societies. For instance, two countries with similar levels of GNP per capita may end up with different scores on HDI due to implementation of different political ideology. Thus, third world countries with socialist orientations tend to place relatively more emphasis on social welfare programmes such as the literacy programme implemented by the Sandanista government in Nicaragua (Crossette, 2004). Having examined development and underdevelopment indicators, it is germane to localize the discourse within the context of women experience in Nigeria.

MANIFESTATIONS OF FEMINIZATION OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Contrary to the international standard of measuring development, local factors such as environmental and cultural practices are also important in examining women experience in development. The activities of males and females affect the environment, which may be degraded

where population growth is too high (Oyekanmi, 2000). The decline in agriculture in Nigeria has had a negative impact on both the status and the decision making capacity of women because changing land patterns and industrialization facilitate rural urban migration and have led to an increase in the number of female headed households in the rural areas, with limited access to land, income and health facilities. Degradation of ecosystem on which women depend for agricultural activities often leaves women handicapped in the provision of adequate nutrition for their household and limits their ability to provide a varied diet. Also, the promotion of monoculture economy and export of petroleum have reduced the biodiversity in the oil producing areas. The reduction in bio-diversity occasioned by monoculture economy has led to a reduction in the availability of household food with adverse effects on health of women and other members of their household (Odejide, 1998; Aina, 1998; Odebiyi and Aina, 1998; Oyekanmi, 2000). In order to bring out the points in understanding feminization of underdevelopment in Nigeria, several variables such as patriarchy, education, employment and poverty are discussed with respect to women experience in Nigeria.

Women Experience in the Nigerian Patriarchal Society

Patriarchy is a way of life in which men are believed to be superior to women. This belief has adverse implications on women. For instance, female children are undervalued in most parts of the world where there is a greater preference for male children. In some communities in Nigeria particularly in the Northern part of the country many girls below 15 years are given out in marriage or withdrawn from schools for many reasons like allowing the male to acquire education and protecting their virginity. However, many girls in Igbo land have greater advantage of post primary education than their male counterparts, who are withdrawn after primary school in order to learn a trade or business, which will enable them to make money early in life. In some countries like China and India, many women are conditioned to go to the extent of fetal scanning in order to perform a selective sex abortion (Aina, 1998; Oyekanmi, 2000).

Furthermore, feminization of under-development has been sustained by unfriendly institu-

tional and socio-cultural practices such as mandatory widowhood rituals, wife inheritance, child marriage and virginity testing, which deny women basic human rights. While men can borrow or inherit land, women remain at disadvantaged position with lack of access to property, hence they remain powerless, poor and dependent on men. Many women in Nigeria are yet to make a significant impact in politics and governance at the local, state and federal levels. The role of many women in traditional Nigerian society remains mainly procreative, domiciliary and passively political, while in the urban areas many women in formal and informal workplaces are also marginalized in occupational and managerial positions (Odebiyi and Aina 1998; Okojie, 1998; Adedokun, 2000). In some Nigerian communities, like in many patriarchal cultures, wife inheritance is practiced. It manifests in levirate and widow inheritance. In Zimbabwe, levirate is popularly supported with a traditional practice called "kugara nhaka", while in Kenya it persists among the Luo (Family Health International, 2005). The problem with wife inheritance is that, in most cases, human rights of women under widow inheritance and levirate are violated with impunity.

Virginity testing is another traditional practice that limits women power to negotiate in development. In this cultural practice, a young woman's relatives or potential suitor insert a finger into her vagina to verify her virginity. In many societies in Africa, virginity testing is sanctioned by cultural practices such as religion and ceremonial rites. If a young woman is found to be a non-virgin, the values placed on her automatically decreases and she becomes stigmatized. However, the young woman's hymen may have been broken naturally but many societies usually ignore such possibility. In response to culture of virginity testing in Malawi, South Africa and Swaziland, some young women usually practice anal sexual intercourse to ensure that they pass virginity test (Family Health International, 2005).

Child marriage is also worthy of examination because it has adverse implications for women development. Child marriage is prevalent in developing countries like Nigeria especially in the northern part of the country. Many governments and international organizations agree that age 18 is the minimum legal age for entry into marriage but more than 100 million girls in developing countries married before they attained age 18 (Bruce, 2004). United Nations Children and

Education Fund (UNICEF) (2001) conducted research in 16 sub-Saharan countries and found that wives aged 15-19 were 10 years younger than their husbands. The long-standing widespread custom of child marriage has deep historic roots. It is facilitated by bride wealth, which is usually inform of compensation given to the bride's family for her domestic obligation and loss of her labour in her family of orientation (Atere and Olagbemi, 1997; Aina, 1998). Thus, many women are seen as valuables primarily due to their high productive and reproductive potentials. However, once married, many of them may have little control over their lives and may not pursue formal education.

Women Experience with the Nigerian Educational System

On women experience in education, from the beginning of schooling in Nigeria more men than women had access to formal education with socialization into different subjects some of which are reserved for men, while other are regarded as women subjects. Thus, initially women were oriented toward teaching and other care-oriented professions such as nursing but since the 1930s more women have gradually entered into men preserved fields such as law, medicine and engineering (Alao, 1998; Obanya, 2003). However, in spite of the increasing rate of women's involvement in the male dominated professions, there is still a relatively high level of illiteracy among some women particularly those in rural areas of Nigeria, as is the case in many developing countries. In the early 1990s, about half (56.7%) of the Nigerian population was literate with higher rate (65.7%) of literacy for male than that (47.8%) of their female counterparts (National Population Commission, 1994). However, despite the fact that more women are joining the league of the literate persons there are still more women than men who are without education. Therefore the educational disparity between men and women has grave implications for employment opportunities for both groups especially women who are more often than not marginalized in the Nigerian labour market.

Women Marginalization in Employment Opportunities in Nigeria

Women marginalization in few available employment opportunities in Nigeria also provides another evidence of feminization of underdevelopment in the country. In Nigeria,

about 56.4 percent of males and 32.4 percent of the female population are economically active as at the end of the 1991 Census (National Population Commission, 1994). The economically active population includes persons who supply their labour for production of economic goods and services. They include employers, employees, self-employed persons and persons who assist in family enterprises with or without pay. The disparity between the number of employed males and females is long standing with men seemingly dominating all forms of work except petty trading. For example, in 1992, whereas there were more than 145, 000 men employed as federal civil servants, there were less than 50, 000 women (Okojie, 1998; Oyekanmi, 2000). Considering almost equal proportion of population distribution of men and women, there may be no justification for this gender gap other than feminization of underdevelopment. In the light of the above, it is logically conceivable that when there is underdevelopment, gender is affected with women bearing the higher burden due to socially determined unequal status. It is obvious that the lower the level of development the more difficult it is to close gender gap. However, considering the similarity in male female ratio in the Nigeria Population, it is obvious that the rationale for Nigeria's low HDI is mainly due to overwhelming proportion of women with low education, low income and low life chances associated with high rate of poverty and maternal mortality.

Women's Vulnerability to the Scourge of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria

The scourge of HIV/AIDS is also of significance in the consideration of feminization of underdevelopment. In Nigeria, as is the case in sub-Saharan Africa and unlike the case in some technologically developed countries of the world, more women than men between the ages of 15 and 49 are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, which remains the potent force of underdevelopment in Africa where the relative helplessness of many women to negotiate sexual matters and restrict sexual coercion within their marriages raises their risks of HIV (Family Health International, 2005). The global statistics of men and women living with HIV/AIDS is presented below for pellucid understanding of women shares of the deadly epidemics.

As can be seen on the table 1 above, women are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa unlike the situations in other regions of

Table 1: The 2004 gender and HIV prevalence rate among population aged 15- 49

<i>Region</i>	<i>% of Women Living with HIV/AIDS</i>	<i>% of Men Living with HIV/AIDS</i>
Sub-Saharan Africa	8.0	6.4
Caribbean	2.3	2.4
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0.6	1.0
Latin America	0.4	0.8
South and South East Asia	0.4	0.9
Middle East and North Africa	0.3	0.3
North America	0.3	0.9
East Asia	0.1	0.2
Oceania	0.1	0.3
Western and Central Europe	0.1	0.4
Global	1.1	1.2

Source: UNAIDS/ WHO, 2004.

the world where there is relative similarity in the proportion of men and women living with HIV/AIDS. The prevalence of HIV infected women in sub-Saharan Africa could be a manifestation of gender variations in ability to negotiate sexual intercourse and disproportionate level of power about prevention of Sexually Transmitted Diseases including HIV/AIDS (Odebiyi and Aina, 1998).

Brief Evaluation of Policies and Responses to Feminization of Underdevelopment

Since the late 1940s and early 1950s, debate about gender and development has remained endless with different outcomes for males and females in different societies of the world. Following feminist victory in the post Second World War era, constitutional changes in gender inequality metamorphosed into the needs for re-arrangement of gender roles across the globe. This trend led to disproportionate improvement in women status in different countries across the world. In North America and Western European countries, many women have enjoyed appreciably high status and equitably contributed to and benefited from human development programmes. However, expectedly, with post-modernization, the majority of the Nigerian women should have derived adequate benefits from life supporting opportunities such as high level of education, job security and access to resources as well as sustainable human development but the realities on ground show the gender glass ceiling worsened by the current economic hardships in the country. Thus, the aura of gender victimization with its attendant hopelessness and deprivation

has approached a full glare manifesting in pitiable living conditions of the greater proportion of the Nigerian women in Nigeria. With the present pitiable socio-economic conditions of many women in Nigeria (the most populous black country), what are the major achievement of successive international conferences that addressed women and development for Nigeria?

In the light of the realities about lives of women across the globe, the answer to the above question is not far fetched. From the 1950s to 2000s, several international conferences on women and development produced different results with different implications for women in different countries. For instance, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development precipitated Cairo agreement and a controversy over reproductive right of women. The controversy produced two groups, one pro-natalist and the other anti-natalist. The latter include the groups with Vatican support and those with the backing of a conservative Islamic government (Crossette, 2005).

With reference to different local and international responses there is lack of universal consensus on understanding status and roles of women or acceptance of why persistent poverty exists in some countries and not in others. However, available development efforts have focused on safe motherhood, more female education, more political participation for women at all levels and "undefined" women empowerment but nothing has been done about the fundamental physical hurdles that women encounter starting with the (extended) family where, in line with cultural practices, women may be treated as the property of male relatives or where in-laws may assert control to the point of violence against women usually young wives and widows in the household (Crossette, 2005). In realization of the foregoing, it is obvious that a lot has been done concerning women and development but many women are still left behind the curtain in development debate. Why is this so? Could it be that the right thing has not been done or is the right thing being done wrongly? The answer to these questions lies in understanding the politics of development across the globe which the next section will address.

Politics of Development

The major obstacles that need to be overcome in philosophy of development are politically

induced sentiments and globally generalized needs assessment. Almost all of the past and present development efforts, rather than embrace human needs and participatory development ethos, have been based on top-bottom approaches that mainly privilege the “Euro-western-centrally” faithful (men and women) at the expense of the views of more women than men in the “Afro-latin-asian” communities. For instance, politics of development can be deciphered in the Millennium Development Goals (triangulation of past development programmes). In the Millennium Development Goals, “Goal-8” of the 8-point Goals with different strategies, examines the need to developing a global partnership for development both nationally and internationally. However, who will decide the agenda for global development partnership? Where will global development agenda be localized? Who are the potential prime beneficiaries of the development agenda? And where does the millennium partnership development agenda provide space for women’s rights and accommodation of the issues that have been highlighted by the Beijing 10- point processes? With complicated questions like these, in the context of the Gender and Development debate, it is not clear that the Millennium Development Goals could be achieved without questioning growth driven models of development. Deconstruction of Goal 8 with respect to the concerns of gender “equitability” can help in evaluating the proposals, which were made at the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women on engendering the Millennium Development Goals (a new dimension to modernization theory).

Modernization Theory

Modernization theory developed at the end of the Second World War in an attempt to produce new order by replacing the declining British hegemony and ensuring economic stability across the world. It was sustained by international conferences in the late 1940s during which the Bretton Woods agreement set up both the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. It was in accordance with the economic doctrine of John M. Keynes, who advocated for an active role for government in economic and social regulation, due to the perceived failure of orthodox free market economics (Kirby, 1997). Within the broad approach of modernization theory, differences of emphasis can be discerned. Some emphasize the

need for economic factors such as capital and technology for the underdeveloped countries to develop, while others place more emphasis on cultural factors. Similarly, some tend to examine a dichotomy of traditional and modern societies, while others appear to present a more complex picture of the process of transition.

The classical modernization theorists noted that the pattern set by western industrialized societies could be followed by the less industrialized societies that need investment and cultural change. For instance, Rostow (1960, cited by Kirby et al., 1997) argued that there were five stages of development, which could be based on gradual evolution. He added that all countries must pass through one path to development. Rostow’s model was based on an analysis of the British industrial revolution. He argued that all countries needed to go through the five stages as follows: traditional stage (ascriptive features with low level of science and technology), preconditions for take off (increase in trade and industrial training with investment and economic growth), take off (growth in investment and social and political reforms), drive to maturity (sustainable economic growth and increasing social and political reforms) and high mass consumption (advanced industrialization and high level of production). The basic idea in the above stages is that advanced industrial societies like North America and Western Europe have achieved development through the aforementioned stages of development. Many women in these industrialized societies have contributed to development and benefited immensely from it unlike many of their counterparts in less-industrialized countries where women’s contributions to development and benefits from it are still at low ebbs.

Modernization theorists argued that the factors inhibiting development in a country could be low level of investment and scientific and technical knowledge. However, the more technologically minded modernization theorists suggested technological transfer from developed countries to underdeveloped countries. This argument provided the theoretical background for the idea of foreign aid. The culturally conscious modernization theorists argued that ideas in Weberian Protestant Ethics thesis could be applied to the less developed countries. This could be made easier through the application of Parsonian functionalist analysis of evolutionary development. Parson’s pattern variables are

instructive here. However, in any country where women's efforts are ignored or underrated, development may not be engendered.

Criticisms of Modernization Theory

Some critiques particularly some of the post modernists believed that modernization theory died during the 1970s. Kiely (1995 cited by Kirby, 1997) argued that modernization theory painted a rosy picture of the reality of modern societies without paying corresponding attention to realities in developing countries. He also noted that contrary to modernization multi-stage theoretical assumption, transition from traditional to modern society require more capital or more enterprises. Modernization theorists ignored the relevance of ascription to development in a society; hence they are relatively ethnocentrically biased in favour of America and men in development. In addition to the above critique, it can be recalled that the status and roles of women in development escaped the attention of modernization thinkers, who either advertently or inadvertently promoted ideologies that help to sustain feminization of underdevelopment. The argument of dependency theorists is relevant here and the next section will attend to that.

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory emerged as an alternative view on development after the Second World War. It was a fundamental critique of modernization theory. It stressed the negative impact of foreign trade links for the developing world and showed that underdeveloped countries existed in a world economy whose structure was determined and dominated by the developed capitalist countries, while modernization theorists identify the internal factors blocking development. Dependency theory is closely associated with Andre Gunder Frank (1979 cited by Kirby, 1997), who was influenced by the Economic Commissions on Latin America (ECLA), the failure of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), Marxism and Cuban revolution. He rejected the notion of progressive bourgeois advocated by the Stalinist Communist Parties of Latin America. He rather advocated that alliance of workers and peasants against the dominant groups would be needed to effect socialist revolution.

Frank argued that it was not correct to

conceive the third world as underdeveloped or traditional as modernization theorists perceived. He noted that development in the third world has been distorted as a result of development of underdevelopment. He argued that this could be conceived as a series of links between the metropolis (the advanced capitalist countries) and satellite areas (developing countries). The relationship between rural and urban areas in satellite areas was also part of the chain. Thus, the ruling class of satellite countries is exploited by foreign capital, but also exploits its own subordinate classes (the majority of whom are women). As result, economic surplus from production flows upwards to the local ruling class and outward to the metropolis (Kirby, 1997).

Frank, however, suggested a revolutionary break with the global system that underdeveloped the third world. This suggestion mixed together nationalism and Marxism (a common mix in the third world). He emphasized that links with the metropolis would not be beneficial but harmful. As such, he noted that development would not be possible without breaking the links to the world capitalist system.

Criticisms of Dependency Theory

Dependency theory was criticized and regarded as utopian due to lack of empirical data to support its notion that no development is possible without a break from capitalism. For instance, the emergence of the East Asian Tigers economies in the late 1980s has provided examples of the social forces that might lead to transformation. In recognition of the theoretical flaws in dependency theory, feminization of underdevelopment is likely to continue as long as the world is polarized into different power blocks in which many women are rendered socially disabled. Therefore, the feminist theory is hereby advanced to drive home the point of the prevailing marginalization of women in development efforts.

Feminist Theory

Any theory that discusses relations of men and women in society is regarded as feminist theory. Thus, various feminist theories include cultural determinism, biological determinism, Marxian/radical feminism, liberal feminism and social feminism. It is unequivocal that women marginalization is mentioned in all feminist

theories but different reasons are advanced for such marginalization in each strand of feminism. For instance, unlike the argument of biological feminists, who noted that nature and biological factors such as genes and hormones subordinated women to men, cultural feminists like Anne Oakley and Sherry Ortner emphasized that woman marginalization is rooted in the ways in which every culture defines and evaluates female biology (Haralambos and Holborn, 2005). While these arguments cannot be wished away especially in the search for the rationale behind women marginalization, the argument of liberal feminists is considered more relevant to the discourse because it stipulated the modalities for incorporating women into development as active players and partners in progress. These modalities include a gender balanced access to life enriching opportunities such as quality education, income, health, power and information.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper addressed feminization of underdevelopment. On a general note, the paper showed that underdevelopment is a serious development problem often rooted in long-standing globalization of inequality and exploitation in which more women than men are at risk. It has been shown that in Nigeria like in many societies of the world, more women than men are facing problems such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, inadequate educational and vocational training opportunities, unfriendly socio-economic environment, occupational segregation and lack of access to credit among other problems too numerous to mention. These problems are sustained by traditional gender norms, which condone male domination thereby supporting feminization of underdevelopment. Specifically, it is obvious that feminization of underdevelopment in which women are denied the opportunity to enjoy a full productive life, especially with respect to health, education, work opportunities and general social well-being occurs more frequently in countries like Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African societies where fertility rates are high such Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In recognition of grave implications of feminization of underdevelopment, appreciable recognition

of women abilities and capabilities is urgently needed to enhance development process and minimize feminization of underdevelopment in Nigeria. Thus, sustainable human development can be achieved through bridging gender gaps in education, politics, economy, social security and other facets of human lives. In addition to bridging gender gaps in education, employment, social security and leadership positions and for sustainable human development to be engendered, the Nigerian government should give women and men equitable priority in the present implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. For instance, it is not in doubt that better-educated women would be more able to make fundamental contributions to resources management and economically empowered women would be more interested in participating in decision making on development programmes. More importantly, the potentials of women as agent of change should be tapped and developed to improve upon the present level of socio-economic situations in Nigeria.

Recommendations are presented in appreciation of this notion: "if you empower a woman you empower a nation but if you empower a man you empower an individual". Against this backdrop and without any iota of doubt, it is imperative that sustainable human underdevelopment may continue to flourish unless women are fully integrated into all aspects of development programmes.

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