

Gender Analysis and the Actualization of Food Security in Nigeria

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Abstract: Agriculture in Nigeria has remained the largest non-oil contributor to the national economy. However, the sector has suffered setbacks, one of which is the disparity in gender opportunity. This paper attempts a gender analysis, the challenges of food security and its implications for food security in Nigeria. The data are obtained mainly from secondary sources and evaluated with content analysis. The Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework (1990) was used to explain the need for women to access to social and economic opportunity so as to enhance their productive capacity. Findings from extant literature showed that lack of adequate opportunity and empowerment affects agricultural production among rural women in Nigeria. The findings provided the basis for suggestions and improvement.

Keywords: Gender analysis, Agriculture, Women Empowerment, Food Security

Date of Submission: 24-09-2018

Date of acceptance: 11-10-2018

I. INTRODUCTION

Food is identified as the most basic of all human survival needs. The concept of food security is based on the definition of the World Food Summit held in Rome in 1974 which means the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right of everyone to be free from hunger (Idachaba, 1993), Odey (2004) articulates food security system concept as the availability and accessibility of foodstuff in the desired quality to all consumers throughout the year. Angus (2008) defines food security as access by all people at all times to sufficient food for a healthy and productive life. Gokum (2007) added that food security is the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies, of basic foodstuff to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuation in production and prices.

The Food and Agricultural Organization (F.A.O., 2002) clearly captured food security as a situation that exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. In underlying concern of food security is the accessibility of the community's or individuals dietary needs at all times, which behoves as a moral obligation on all human beings to ensure that this topmost priority amongst the basic requisites of man is met for his survival.

Though Nigeria prides itself as the giant of Africa with its economy becoming the largest in 2014, the poverty rate in the country is of serious concern (Anam, 2011). There is widespread hunger in Nigeria, especially in rural areas. Food insecurity is strongly linked to several global issues, such as population growth, the surge in energy demand as well as competition for land and water and issues of climate change. This concern has attracted policy actions on the part of the government to boost agriculture. Approximately one billion people worldwide are undernourished, many more suffer from micronutrient deficiencies and the absolute numbers tend to increase further, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (FOA, 2008). This shows that either the policies are not properly defined or there is a gap between existing policies and expected realities.

According to Mehra (2003), in most communities, women play a pivotal role in economic development in reducing poverty through collective action. Agriculture has been a major medium through which women contribute immensely to community development. According to Otu and Anam (2016), noted that Agriculture employs over 65 percent of the Nigeria population. Women play an integral part in the agricultural production, as a subsistence farmer, each crop growers, food processors, and livestock owners, among others (Doss, Bockius- Suwy & D'Souza, 2012). It therefore, follows that empowering women farmer's group or organizations will impact the agricultural markets overall, hence community development. Some of the areas in which women farmers' organization contributes are food security and production for community development.

In a study conducted by Kohl (2006) on rural women, food security, and agricultural cooperatives', it was established that women play a significant role in agricultural production and household food security. household food security here implies a condition where the family at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Women play a major role in food production in the developing world. The aim of this paper is to assess gender analysis, the challenges of food security and its implications for food security. Data are obtained mainly from secondary sources and examined using content analysis. The findings provided the basis for suggestions and improvement.

Statement of the problem

The Nigerian economy is still defined as underdeveloped, characterized by poverty. Agricultural production in most part is largely subsistent due to inaccessibility to technology and other limitations to key into the gains of technology and mechanization. Food insecurity remains prevalent in Nigeria. Malnutrition has resulted in the death of many of its citizens. Achieving the objectives of sustainable economic development in Nigeria remains uncertain without well-nourished and healthy people. The problem requires a timely check; otherwise, it may lead to many social problems including civil unrest, malnutrition and so on. The Nigeria rural areas have become vulnerable to malnutrition, erratic supply of food items, unaffordable food costs, low-quality foods and sometimes complete lack of food (Idachaba, 2004; Gokum, 2007). Gender inequality in agriculture affects women across the rural and urban area. This inequality affects women access to credit facilities and income. This condition inhibits women's production and income generation opportunities. As women do not own asset, it is extremely difficult for them to have access to credit facilities as most women do not have collateral to present. This study analysis gender challenges on food security in Nigeria.

Conceptual discourse

Gender analysis

In most developing societies, women have traditionally been disadvantaged compared to men. Until recently, studies of these societies for the purpose of planning development covered women narrowly in terms of population, health and family planning (March 1999; Leach, 2003; Ochola, 2010). There have been little concerns about domestic violence or involvement in economic activities (Brouwer, 1998). Gender analysis provides more information, bringing benefits to women and to society as a whole. The Women in Development (WID) approach emerged in the 1970s, calling for treatment of "women's issues" in development projects. Later, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach proposed more emphasis on gender relations rather than seeing women's issues in isolation (Kabeer, 1994).

Gender analysis has commonly been used as a tool for development and emergency relief projects. Vernooy (2006) maintained that the socially constructed roles of men and women must be understood in a project or program design, as must roles related to class, caste, ethnicity, and age. Gender analysis helps to gain an understanding of the different patterns of participation, involvement, behaviour, and activities that women and men in their diversity have in economic, social and legal structures and the implications of these differences. The focus of this study is to assess the opportunities of women in agriculture and other economic activities required to foster food security.

Gender inequality and lack of viable opportunities for women is a major setback in agricultural production in Nigeria. Rural women are largely disadvantaged and this affects their productive capacity. However, the women-in-agriculture programme in Nigeria, which was established in cognizance of this and the shortcoming in extension services for women farmers, has been a huge success. Women's groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil societies have empowered and given rural women farmers a voice and effectively championed their cause. Women farmers now have economic opportunities with better access to farm inputs and credits. Notwithstanding, there are other challenges that need to be addressed.

Most poor and food insecure people live in rural areas and depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihoods. On average, agriculture provides 64 percent of employment and represents 34 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the poorest countries. Although the vast majority of people affected by the rise in food prices live in the poorest countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, hunger and food insecurity are present among poor, rural and indigenous people in all developing regions. Historically, women farmers organization aiding agricultural growth have shown the way out of hunger and food insecurity, for most of the rural poor in both developed and developing countries (Sinha 2006). More recently, this has been in China and India where agriculture-led economic growth has reduced poverty. Collier (2008) therefore opined that "GDP growth generated in agriculture is at least twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth generated by other sectors".

Strategies and investments to improve food production among small-scale farmers, such as increasing crop yields, are needed to ensure food security and economic growth. These strategies also must account for women who in many regions are vital to small-scale and increasingly cash crop- agriculture. This is especially true in Sub-Saharan Africa where "women play a pivotal role in ... agriculture", being responsible for nearly all food production, 60 percent of marketing, and at least half the (asks involved in storing food and raising animals Gillanger (2009). In Latin American majority of the people ensuring food security comprise of women in women farmers organization and small groups (World Bank, 2008).

Davies (2009) expressed the opinion that most low-income women in developing countries live and work in rural areas and agriculture is their primary source of livelihood, They produce both food and cash crops and have multiple and diverse roles. They work on their own plots and those of others; they work as unpaid or paid workers, employers, and employees, and as wage laborers in both on- and off-farm enterprises. This cooperation is possible because they belong to women farmers" organization and ensure food security in their activities.

Food security

The World Food Conference defined food security simply as: "Availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic food-stuffs" (United Nations, 2009). The World Bank proposed a definition of food security availability to include access to food and narrowing the focus from the global and national to households and individuals: "Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life" (World Bank, 2012).

The International Food Security Services Report (IFSS, 2002), defined food security with inter-related components to include:

- i. Food availability. The effective or continuous supply of food at both national and household levels which is affected by input and output market conditions, as well as the production capabilities of the agricultural sector;
- ii. Food access or effective demand. The ability of nations and households to acquire sufficient food on a sustainable basis and address issues of purchasing power and consumer behavior;
- iii. Utilization: Generally, utilization refers to the pattern in which the body makes use and benefits from the various food nutrients. Utilization is determined by food quality, nutritional values, and preparation method with storage as well as feeding pattern.
- iv. Stability: this refers to the stability of food availability, accessibility, and utilization over time. All three components must be present simultaneously at all times. A person who has adequate access to quality food today is still considered food insecure if he has periodic inadequate access to food which may cause his nutritional level to deteriorate. Variation in weather conditions, political and economic instability, and price fluctuation are some factor that may impact on food security status (IFSS, 2002; Saheed and Isa, 2017).

The opposite of food security is food insecurity (Devereux, Vaitla & Hanstein, 2008). This refers to a lack of access to an adequate diet which can be either temporary (transitory food insecurity) or continuous (chronic food insecurity). Food insecurity continues to be a key development problem across the globe, undermining people's health, productivity and often their very survival (Smith & Subandoro, 2007). Since the attainment of food security in any country is usually an insurance against hunger and malnutrition, both of which slow down economic development (Davies, 2009), all developed and developing countries must provide policies and strategies to increase their food production capacity.

Generally, a country is food secure when a majority of its population has access to food in sufficient quantity and quality consistent with decent existence at all times (ReutJinger 1985; Idachaba 2004). It has been documented since the 1980s that the achievement of food security requires paying attention to the supply-side which can be secured through agricultural production, commercial imports or food aid on the demand side food has to be safe, nutritious and appropriate to meet food preferences (Devereux Vaitla & Hanstein, 2008).

Francis (2004) had disclosed that the steep increase in global food prices-83 percent over the past three years- has added nearly 100 million people to the numbers who are chronically hungry, pushing the world total to nearly 1 billion people. Amid a global financial crisis and further market instability, the number of poor people also is climbing, undoing significant gains made against hunger and poverty in the past decade. The World Bank (2008) also expressed the opinion that these concerns have prompted renewed interest and discussion on the role of agricultural growth and development as a means to address both hunger and poverty. After two decades of decline in agriculture and international development assistance, governments and donors are recommitting attention and resources to agriculture. The New Economic Programme for African Development (NEPAD) for example, urged African governments to increase spending on agriculture to 10 percent of national budgets.

The FAO (2009) is however worried and noted that what is missing from these discussions and decision points is a commitment to women farmers and resources to strengthen their roles in the agricultural economy, four decades of research demonstrate the varied and crucial responsibilities that women hold in

agriculture and the value of their contributions, both economic and social. Rural women produce half of the world's food and in developing countries, between 60 percent and 80 percent of food crops. Women are also more likely than men to spend their income on the well-being of their families, including more nutritious foods, school fees for children and healthcare because when credit is provided directly to women, it can increase household consumption and children's schooling. Loan repayment rates are highest for women than for men (Schultz in King & Hill. 2003). Yet agricultural investment does not reflect these facts. Women in forestry, fishing, and agriculture received just seven percent of the total and for all sectors (OECD. 2008).

Food security, economic growth, and development are inter-related and depend critically on new strategies and improvements in agricultural development and organization (World Bank, 2008). They require strategies that focus on increasing women organization, food productivity, and incomes among small-scale farmers and access to income and employment for rural poor people who lack access to land. Antai and Anam (2015) noted that though successive governments in the state have tried to address the issue of poverty by enhancing food security, the effect of the policies and programmes on reducing poverty among the populace has been that of mixed feelings.

Theoretical framework

Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework

The study adopts The Women's Empowerment Framework, otherwise known as the Longwe Framework to explain the variables examined. The framework was developed by was developed by Sara Hlupekile Longwe (1990). The framework helps planners understand the practical meaning of women's empowerment and equality, and then to evaluate whether a development initiative supports this empowerment (Van, 2006).

The basic premise is that women's development can be viewed in terms of five levels of equality: welfare, access, "conscientization", participation and control. Empowerment is essential at each of these levels. Welfare addresses basic needs, and access addresses the ability to use resources such as credit, land, and education. "Conscientization" is a key element of the framework: the recognition that discrimination creates gender-related problems and women may themselves contribute to this discrimination. With participation, women are equal to men in making decisions, and with control, the balance of powers between the genders is equal (Vernooy, 2006). Longwe argues that poverty arises not from lack of productivity but from oppression and exploitation. Women need equal access to social and economic opportunity so as to enhance their productive capacity. Empowerment is an essential element of development and enables assessment of interventions along this criterion.

Gender analysis and the actualization of food security in Nigeria

Women's organizations, patterns of agricultural production and the value of women's work have been verified and documented from the time Boserup (1970) first drew attention to women's role in agriculture. At (the time, she also highlighted the failure of development agencies to incorporate women's needs because the prevailing thought was that women worked in the household and not in economic activities such as agriculture. Much of the research since then has been directed at showing how these flawed assumptions led to project failures (Saito & Weideman 2004). A classic example of such a failure was that of a Bolivian llama and wool development project where women were responsible for fundamental economic activities such as llama herding and shearing, but instead were given "training in what "were" considered women's task- cooking, embroidery, knitting, crochet and artificial flower making (Buvinic, 1986).

The research spurred interest and action in the use of gender analysis as a tool for project design and women increasingly were targeted as beneficiaries of agricultural projects. By including women, it was assumed development projects would be more efficient and therefore, successful. However, "taking women into account" proved insufficient as development practitioners belatedly realized that women were not a homogenous group; their roles and responsibilities within agriculture were as variable as those of men, and gender roles and relationships between women and men were dynamic and changeable. Tourism of that day- such as the distinctions between cash crops (male) and food crops (female) were found to be less clear than previously thought. New economic opportunities were changing the agricultural roles of women and men, often with men moving into women's activities when they proved profitable and women making more progress because of associational linkages (Ross 2011).

Gender analysis contributed to multiple cultural contexts. Understanding the gender division of labor by crop and task was crucial on many levels of shaping how development assistance should be structured and who should be targeted. It also explained the differences between women and men in the adoption of new technologies and risk-taking behavior. In Zimbabwe, for example, gender analysis helped to explain the differences between women and men in ranking the importance of taste when choosing to adopt high yielding maize. The taste was more important to women than higher yields because women grew maize for consumption

whereas men grew it as a cash crop. (Quisumbing & Pandol, 2008) such analysis also suggested that women may have had a lower tolerance for risk and was slower to adopt new technologies because they typically have and control fewer productive resources (Ross, 2011).

Challenges and prospects of gender issues, agriculture and food security in Nigeria

The historicity of agricultural production in Nigeria reveals that agriculture, since independence, has been a major contributor to the Nigeria economy. The agriculture sector has been metamorphosed by commercial activities from small to medium and large-scale level of the market. The principal cash crops include cocoa, oil palm, and rubber while major staple foods are rice, cassava, yams, maize, taro, sorghum, and millet. Production of timber and livestock rearing such as goats, sheep, cattle, and poultry as well as artisanal fisheries are the common occupation (Saheed and Isa, 2017). Agriculture in Nigeria has remained the largest non-oil contributor to the national economy.

Nigeria is grossly an agrarian state which is reflected in the fact that over 70% of her economically active population is employed in the agriculture sector. The difference lies in the kind of crop that is cultivated in the various regions of the country depending on the soil characteristics and climatic conditions (Saheed and Isa, 2017). The events of the 1970s with the discovery of oil in Nigeria led to a shift of interest from agriculture to crude oil. From this period, agricultural activities have been grossly limited. More so, within the areas of oil exploration, the resultant effect of frequent oil spillage further limits agricultural production in the south region of the country. Also, agricultural activities in the north are sometimes plagued by extreme weather conditions such as drought and flooding during the raining season. The south-west and south-east have over the years had a relative balance condition for agriculture but unfortunately, these two regions also have the highest level of education in the country and mostly seek for opportunities outside the agriculture sector (Saheed and Isa, 2018). In Nigeria, women play a dominant role in agriculture compare to their men counterpart.

Women have a lot of constraints in ensuring food security in Africa and Nigeria in particular. From gender analysis, the international development community have shown that women face significant barriers in agriculture, especially inequalities in access to and control over crucial resources and inputs such as land, labour, fertilizer and formal finance (Ross, 2011) women also face barrier to membership in rural organizations and cooperatives, agricultural inputs and technology such as improved seedlings, training and extension, and marketing services.

Gender inequality is one of the causes of food insecurity. It is estimated that 60% of global chronically hungry people are women and girls, while 98% of them are from the global south countries (Otaha, 2013). Women face lots of discrimination both in seeking education and job and face a similar fate even at home within the household, yet women are mostly responsible for preparing meals and taking care of the children. They in fact, mostly spend all or a good fraction of their income on feeding and their children's needs (WFP, 2009).

According to Matemilola and Elegbede (2017), gender inequality is one of the primary driving forces of food insecurity because this is the most important concern of people who are denied access or unable to engage in labor. They explained that the vulnerability of women is most pronounced when assessing the effect of the food crisis. They constitute the larger ratio of the poverty-ridden population, especially in Africa. In many parts of the world, when a woman heads a household, they are often more vulnerable to poverty and hunger than a household headed by a man. Where there is no male income earner, negative consequences on overall income are often suffered by the household since women often times lack the ability to command labor within and outside the household. Families headed by widow-are particularly at a disadvantaged position (ADB, 2013; Matemilola and Elegbede, 2017).

Blackden and Canagarajah (2003) are of the opinion that unequal rights and obligations within households and societies impose restrictions on women's time use and availability, which can undermine their efficiency and productivity due to multiple responsibilities and time conflicts as well as fewer long-term human capital investments, such as education. Women have lower levels of education in all developing regions, a factor found to be significant in adopting new technology and assuming the risk. Gender roles also mean that many women have less influence in household decision making, especially in making independent decisions (Sinha, 2006).

These barriers and restrictions greatly constrain women's agricultural productivity. Research finds that these barriers account for food shortages, affects economic growth through lower crop yields, delayed adoption of new technology and plant varieties, and environmental degradation. Data from Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate that agricultural output is reduced because of women's limited access to inputs and support services. Women in Nigeria and the Gambia had lower yields than men due to the inferior quality of their land, and women in the Gambia experienced lower yields for the same crops due to scale diseconomies caused by the smaller size of women's plots compared with men's (Akerlele, Momoh, Aromolaran, Oguntona, and Shittu, 2013).

There have been efforts to address the concern of inequality and disparity in economic opportunities for women. Past efforts to target women in food security and agriculture have in recent time led to the formation of an association of women as "marginalized and vulnerable" (Ogbonna, Nomura, and Aoyagi, 2013). The result has prompted the development community to adopt welfare approaches more often than economic development and empowerment. It is important that women be given the right opportunity and empowerment to enhance agricultural production and food security. The following are worth considering improving the capacity of rural women so as to achieve improve productivity and food security in Nigeria,

- i. Provision of access to credit facilities has been shown empirically in various studies to have improved farmer's productivity. It is important for small-holder farmers, especially women to have access to credit facilities, particularly during the sowing period to enable them to afford quality seeds, pesticides, fertilizers as well as hire/purchase of equipment needed for production.
- ii. There is a need to empower the capacity of rural women through improved technology to facilitate agricultural production in Nigeria. This can be achieved through the formation of women social groups and associations. It can serve as a viable capacity building platform for farmers and other social groups to form a force and gain access to credit facilities, inputs, markets and other resources.
- iii. There is a need to improve rural infrastructure in rural areas so as to enhance the social and economic wellbeing of rural dwellers, especially the women. Such basic infrastructures include access roads, electricity, and potable water can have an immense impact on the economy. For farmers to be productive these basic amenities need to be accessible. Electricity for an instance cannot be compromised to power storage facilities of sometimes farm equipment. Road and transport give them access to the market and thus improving their economy.

II. CONCLUSION

The paper examined issues of gender and food security in Nigeria. It has been established that gender inequality in agriculture affects women across rural areas in the country and this condition affects women access to credit facilities and income. This condition inhibits women's production and income generation opportunities. It concludes the need to empower rural women through technology, access to credit facilities that will improve agricultural productivity and enhance food security. Actualizing the objective of food security in Nigeria will help maintain employment and create new jobs, increase incomes, improve health and ultimately raise the living standard of the people.

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IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 5070, Journal no. 49323.

1Judith Eteng Otu'' Gender Analysis and the Actualization of Food Security in Nigeria'' IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 23 no. 10, 2018, pp. 35-41