GENDER INEQUALITY: THE WEAK PERSPECTIVE OF PARTICIPATORY GENDER BUDGETING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Gender- based discrimination is found in all national economies in the world. Women bears the brunt because of their unpaid work accounts for about the half of the global GDP, yet women remain under-valued and under-represented in all the national activities including laws and policies particularly in the developing nations of the world. The question of gender budgeting and participation in budgeting and governance processes has gained tremendous attention in recent years, but Nigeria as a nation is far-far from implementing these. Instead, eyes were closed to gender balances and issues dominate in national and international strategies. This paper explored these issues, looks and studied critically at them in the constitutional process in Nigeria. Civil society institutions whose role is to expand and strengthen the links between the Federal government of Nigeria, civil society and the women-folk in rural communities in Nigeria such as Committee of Women and Development (COWAD), lack the capacity to introduce participatory budgeting. As a result of this fault, no systematic participatory planning, let alone planning that is gender sensitive.

Keywords: *Civil society, budgeting, women, participation, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Gender-based discrimination is rampant and found in all nations and societies particularly in the developing nations of the world, Nigeria inclusive and all national economies in the world. No nation even in the technologically advanced countries has managed to eliminate gender parity and gender gap and in every country, women find it more difficult than men to participate equally in economic disposition and in the political life. Nigeria as a nation is a signatory to all the international legally binding and non-binding documents regarding gender equality and human rights, including the Beijing platform for action, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals that ended in the year 2015 and the present Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In spite of these commitments, the Nigerian Government has carried out no systematic work on equal access of women to a place in all the institutions (political, economic, social and educational). As a result of non-challant attitudes, gender gaps persist in all strata and spheres of people's lives and are seen in many areas of socio-political life, from women's lack of political representation to the experience of unprecedentedly high rates of domestic violence.

In the same vein, gender discrimination leads to significant focus in potential learning, economic output and in the area of safe motherhood practices. Where the gender gaps closed in the labour market, and equal access to resources in agriculture production achieved, then food production could be raised by 30%. United Nations (2012) and the income of these women could be increased, contributing to national income.

Across the world, developed nations inclusive, women's unpaid work accounts for about 50 percent of the world total GDP (Fanon, 1974). Yet, women particularly in the

developing nations remain solidly undervalued and under-represented in national policies, political participation even on matters that concerns the women-folk. In Nigeria, scholars and researchers calculate the loss to the annual budget due to gender discrimination and segregation to be roughly 40-50 percent.

Today and in the present 21st century, there is growing understanding that international conventions, treaties and constitutional provisions are in totality insufficient to achieve their gender equality. As a road map to progress in this area, gender budgeting and participatory mechanism may hugely contribute to reducing the menace of gender inequality.

What is Gender Inequality?

There is no doubt about gender inequality. Among humans, the desire for equality is universal. But sad to note, the very fact that the idea of human equality has had to be repeated so frequently proves that until equality has eluded man-kind.

Can anyone seriously argue that now and despite all the programmes the Beijing Declarations (1985), Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) that just remains ten years (10) to go and to the middle of the 21st century.. Things have changed for the better? Do all citizens of the developed nations (United States of America, United Kingdom, France, China and Germany) or those of any of the 185 members of the United Nations really enjoy the equal rights with which they were supposedly born?

The idea of equality among all men may be 'self-evident', that is, rights to "life", liberty (freedom) and the pursuit of happiness. These are very far from equal for all people. For instance, what equality is in the right to life can we speak of when a child in Africa must share one (1) medical doctor with about 2,569 other patients/people, when as a child in Europe (U.K., Germany, Poland, Sweden, Finland and United States of America) does so with only 289 patients or people (DFID, 2000). Or what equality is rights to liberty and the pursuit of happiness is there when about one-third of the boys and two thirds of the girls in these E-9 nations (Egypt, Nigeria, Brazil, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan and Indonesia will grow up illiterate (Delors, 1998) whereas in places like Japan, Germany, Great Britain, practically every child is guaranteed on education.

What about life expectancy? What equality does the African female new born with a life expectancy of 56 years enjoy in comparison with Canadian female infant with a life expectancy of 79 years? Inequality has many faces; all of these faces are ugly. Inequality in living standards and in opportunities for health care, education, basic literacy and adult learning are but some of them. Sometimes political, racial or religious differences play a decisive role in depriving people of their dignity and liberty. Despite all the talks, debates and conferences on and about equality, we live in a world of inequality. It is a scourge, a cause of widespread grief, great affliction and sadness of the highest order. As the word is described – inequality sweeps across every level of human society. The pain it causes in the form of intergenerational poverty, sickness, ignorance, unemployment, backwardness and discrimination stabs the heart.

Gender Inequality in Nigeria

That God created human beings to be equal does not mean that He God intended for all of them to be equal in every ramifications. They could differ in talents, interests and personality. They could also differ in status or in degrees of authority and in development. Man and woman are not equal in all respects, but God created the woman "as a complement" of the man (Genesis, 2:18). Parents and children obviously differ in authority. Despite these differences, all men, women and children were to enjoy as a God-given right

equal opportunities to satisfy the basic requirements for happiness. They were all to enjoy equal dignity and standing before God.

The Status of Nigerian Women

The status of Nigeria women in general has continuingly to decline. Gender issues in most national and state documents tend to be stated in highly general terms and there are no gender-specific lines in the budget. In Nigeria for example, no women features in the eastern House of Assembly in 1961.

The Second Republic only a female senator Franca Afegbua was elected into the senate in 1983, in 1992 out of 300 gubernatorial aspirants during the kangaroo transition programme of self-styled president Ibrahim Babangida regime. Only 8 women were allowed which represent poor percentage of 2.6 percent. None of these women made it to Government House as all seats were won by men.

Economic forum report on global gender gap which examines the gap between men and women in four key categories – economic, participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. Nigeria ranked 106 among 135 nations of the world.

So why are the gender gaps still so wide? One major reason is that the stereotype that women's place is in the home and when the man is the main breadwinner, while the women continues the task of earning money for procreation raring and care of the family (Hausmann, 2012). As UNDP report says, there is "a shift away from the aim, declared in the 1990s of establishing a society like Nigeria based on gender equality (UNDP, 2010).

The Role of Feminist Movement in Nigeria

The feminist movement remains very weak and unpopular in Nigeria, which partially explains the widening of gender gaps. The political party Women in Nigeria received 8 percent of the votes in the 1979 in the General Elections, but by the end of that republic they lost support and since then has never put up any action to contest again. Low representation of women is conditioned by a glass ceiling as one expert in Nigeria argues that the problem of women folk is external but the other one is low self-esteem. Only 40 percent of Nigerian women in management positions want to be CEOs while the vast majority of Nigerian women work outside the home, their situation in the workplace has worsened since global melt down. It now takes a lot more for a woman to get into a male dominated business area. The owners are unwilling to hire women, let alone to promote them to a high positions. Women with small children, single mothers, single women with ageing parents and middle aged professionals are especially vulnerable being displaced from their jobs.

In a society without any coherent mechanism and approaches for protecting family members who need protection, domestic violence against women, children and other weaker family members remains at an incredibly high level in Nigeria. It is estimated that over 5.5 million women are killed annually by complications from childbirth and about 26 thousand children are victims of parental abuse. The situation is further complicated by the fact that law enforcement officers and people themselves perceive domestic violence as a private conflict between spouses but not as a crime against the person.

Gender Policies, Civil Society Outlook

In Nigeria today, as previously in the developed countries of the world, all existing social problems and upheavals are referred to as women's matters and are treated as requiring "care for vulnerable population"

such as people living in abject poverty and penury, people with one kind of disabilities, the elderly of the rural and urban societies, street children, children on the street, beggars and marginalized people – in other words, the majority of these people. Those in charge of these institutions – social workers, schools, hospitals, non-governmental organisation among others are predominantly women.

The Domain of Budgetary Expenditures

The domain of budgetary expenditures on gender inequality is traditionally seen and perceived to be of lesser concern, lesser importance and is therefore financed on the ruminant of the main budget. This really means what is left off of over the important expenditure. No actual allocation for the empowerment of the women. The issue of kidnapping and raping were also considered to be women's issues, but women's participation in politics was provided through official quotas at the level of 20 percent in Nigeria.

The Lack of Women's Representation

The lack of full representation of women folk at the decision-making level led to the low prioritisation of women's problems. The Ministry of Women Affair and Development which is responsible for implementation of gender-minded policy, was playing a low level of representation of the women matters.

The Nigerian National Budget is currently regulated by the National Assembly at Abuja where the principles of budget distribution are articulated and second by budget and planning in which classification of budget spending includes education, health care and social policy. These areas of spending here in Nigeria, traditionally, especially social policy, were assumedly the Federal Government to the gender-sensitive particularly in Nigeria and other nations in the developing world. One of the major reasons why this is so is the lack of a critical large numbers of women in the "important" decisions making structures. This reason greatly limit women's to protect and promote their own interests.

The low or drop in the proportion of women members in the 36 states House of Assembly and National Assembly – (the House of Representatives and the senate) at Abuja Nigeria makes it so difficult for the women rise to make their voice to be heard.

The Social Motherhood Issues

The Organisations in Nigeria that are in charge of gender inequality such as The Committee of Women and Development (COWAD) Women in Nigerian (WIN) and host of others are into family issues, issues of children, marginalized women and problems of pensioners and lately in Nigeria. Social policy includes budget lines such as problem of family and children, social provision for expenses of pregnancy and children, welfare payments for children of single mothers and welfare payments for those living in grief poverty (income below the minimum standard of living), marginalized people or the wretched of the earth.

Gender segregation is at the peak particularly at the executive level. This has its own discriminatory impact on budget expenditures. The major expenditures are allocated to institutions and industries dominated by men.

Gender-Sensitive Participatory Budgeting in Nigeria: Challenges and Opportunities

In recent year, the participatory approach and gender-responsive budgeting have been increasingly used as an effective tool to hold governments acceptable for gender equality and social development (Ojo, 2019: Hansmann, 2012). Participatory approaches acknowledge the need for dialogue between stakeholders and groups of people with different interests as a tool for finding common ground and therefore opening doors for women's voices and subsequently for gender budgeting. Gender budgetary is an approach where gender-based budget

analysis can reveal the efficacy of budget, policy in terms of its impact on the lives of both men and women (Alexander 2007).

To date, over 70 nations across the globe, including same in the commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) some engaged in or supported gender budgeting initiatives allocations targeted specifically at gender inequality (UNIFEM, 2008).

Lessons Learnt From other Nations of the World

The first gender-responsive budgeting initiative took place in Australia in the mid-1980s. The Australian Government attempted to analyse government budgets from a gender perspective and introduced Women's Budget statements in Government Departments as a tool for mainstreaming gender into economic and social policy. Since then, the Australian experience has been introduced into the political agenda in many countries worldwide.

At the same time, participatory approaches progressively take place worldwide. Some nations in transition, such as Argentina, Venezuela and Mexico, (all in Latin America) some migrated participatory budgeting initiatives in their municipality planning, when gender concerns have also been successfully integrated (UNIFEM, 2008).

Gender equitable processes have taken place in Rwanda, where political will made it possible for the government to undertake significant efforts to implement gender mainstreaming at all levels of decision making process. Rwanda is the only country in the world with a majority of women in the parliament (56%) A national gender policy and imbalances were also adopted there in 2004 (MineCoffin 2009). Gender- responsive budgeting has also been in progress in the health, education and agriculture sectors. Officials of these Ministries in developed nations of the world received training and were required to develop a gender budget statement ensuring gender sensitivity in government strategies such as in the economic development and poverty reduction programme in Nigeria

Conclusion

Lack of systematic work on the elimination of gender gaps and gender inequality, most specifically in political institutions, has been the case in the case in the Nigerian government in recent years. Since the 1990s the government has shown a backward tendency, away from gender equality, shifting back towards patriarchal assumptions that women in developing countries particularly in Nigeria is in the kitchen and home as well as roles tradition. Gender discrimination leads to significant social and economic loss and lack of inclusion of gender sensitive perspectives reduces the efficiency of social policy at all levels of governance in Nigeria.

In spite of the scarcity of budgetary allocations and resources which is true of, after all, for the national budget of any nation, there are possibilities for the introduction of gender responsive budgeting using participatory approaches, including the budget at local as well as national level. Strong partnerships between government and civil society institutions, such as Committee of Women and Development, Women in Nigeria and Women in Non-Governmental Organisations are needed as an incentive for the process. Long term capacity building and empowerment is highly needed especially for the 774 local governments in Nigeria, so that they are able to address the needs of the communities they serve. But at this moment, they are very weak poorly resourced, have a lack of adequate knowledge of gender equality related methodologies particularly for mainstreaming, budgeting and planning and are also limited by low strong political will and commitment.

These challenges result in unmet gender needs in Nigeria and in other developing nations

particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Poor and marginalized women at the grassroots and men have many capacities to improve their own lives. Supports for improvements in gender responsive social and financial standards for planning and forecasting, and harmonized data based on international commitments should continue unabated and also to be expanded. Gender needs assessments, monitoring of gender issues in programming to improve gender responsiveness, gender based analyses of government projects and gender mainstreaming. Finally, gender inclusive national goals, policy and monitoring could help the achievement of equal representation at policy making level decrease the double burden of job and family responsibilities and com at discrimination at work and violence against women at home.

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