First Thing First, Arguing the Case for the Inclusion of Women in Energy Decision Making Process towards Achieving Sustainable Rural Development in Practice: The Nigerian case

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Abstract

With increasing globalization, a major concern affecting the quality of life and productivity in rural areas is the issue of available and affordable modern energy service. Nigerian women are specifically at the receiving end of this issue as they are responsible for providing food for the family while relying on energy for household tasks as well as productive/commercial activities. However, the substandard quality fuel used by these women contributes to socio-economic problems caused by environmental degradation, increased workload, ill health, etc. In spite of these burdens energy policies and strategies are perceived to be gender-neutral. Nigerian rural women, therefore, continue to be under-represented in the decision-making process. Premised on existing studies, this paper investigates the disparities faced by rural women in the energy decision-making process in Nigeria. Guided by the feminist legal method, an approach founded on women’s experience of exclusion and postulated by renowned feminist scholars (Katharine T. Bartlett, Patricia A. Cain, Martha Albertson Fineman, etc.); the paper makes a case for the inclusion of rural women in the energy decision-making process in Nigeria. Hence, it argues that making gender analysis the first step and an integral part of decision-making process can bring about sustainable energy laws, policies, as well as practices that address the socio-economic challenges experienced by rural women in Nigeria. Findings reveal, first, “No data, no visibility; no visibility, no interest.” Second, international framework namely, the United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPFA) recognizes that achieving sustainable development requires for the national government to treat men and women equally as well as analyze and integrate the practice, experience and standpoint of rural women in the decision-making processes. Third, giving rural women a voice in energy decision-making can aid in shaping the contents of energy policies and strategies that can translate into sustainable rural development and ultimately national economic growth. Perhaps, the reason why various energy programmes created by the Federal Government of Nigeria are yet to bring about visible developmental changes is because there are no gender analytic tools adopted by energy decision-makers. Fourth, not integrating the perspective of rural women into energy decision-making process implies that any progress towards attaining “sustainable development will remain incomplete.” The paper, therefore, makes a case for the adoption and utilization of a gender analysis tool by the Nigerian government as the first step to formulating energy policies and strategies that are inclusive of rural women’s energy concern. Notwithstanding, there are obstacles to adopting a gender analysis tool.

Keywords: Sustainable Rural Development, Nigeria, Inclusion of Women
Introduction

Sustainable, accessible and affordable modern energy service is a primary issue affecting rural development, productivity, and quality of life in rural areas; with increasing globalization, the situation gets worse. Nigerian women are specifically at the receiving end of this issue as they are responsible for providing food for the family while relying on energy for household tasks as well as productive/commercial activities. However, the substandard quality fuel used by these women contributes to socio-economic problems caused by environmental degradation, increased workload, ill health, etc. In spite of these burdens energy policies and strategies are perceived to be gender-neutral.\(^1\) Nigerian rural women, therefore, continue to be under-represented in the energy decision-making process.\(^2\) In investigating existing disparities confronted by rural women, the paper’s goal is to make a case for the inclusion of rural women in the energy decision-making process in Nigeria. Guided by the feminist legal method, an approach founded on women’s experience of exclusion\(^3\) and postulated by renowned feminist scholars (Katharine T. Bartlett, Patricia A. Cain, Martha Albertson Fineman etc.); the paper argues for the adoption of a gender analysis tool. It further argues that, making gender analysis the first step and an integral part of decision-making process can bring about sustainable energy laws, policies, as well as practices that address the socio-economic challenges experienced by rural women in Nigeria.

Through the optic of feminists’ scholars, I begin this paper by exploring the theoretical foundation on gender disparities and gender analysis tool (GAT). Part II introduces rural women focusing on why energy is a woman’s issue. In part III, I show how and why rural women should be integrated into energy decision-making processes. I thereafter examine the international framework(s) supporting the adoption and utilization of GAT after which I conclude.

1.0 Part I: Theoretical Foundation: Through a Feminist Optic
1.1 Exploring the Feminist Legal Method

Gender inequality is a term commonly used by feminists to deconstruct any form of discrimination and domination experienced by women. They perceive the current patriarchal society as reflective of a hierarchical structure that dominates and relegates the viewpoint of women to the background.\(^4\) Furthermore, they are of the view that decision-making processes have misrepresented, silenced and disadvantaged women by excluding their


\(^4\)Patricia Smith, Introduction to Feminist Jurisprudence, ed. Patricia Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3. See also, Robin West, “Jurisprudence and Gender,” The University of Chicago Law Review 55, no. 1 (1988): 60 (However, Robin West argues that the use of the term feminist jurisprudence is a mis-normal. She claims that the proper concept should be feminist legal theory).
In this regard, feminist scholars as a group deal with the past and present exploitation confronted by women with the aim of seeking ways of empowering women and transforming a male dominated institution. According to Gordon, feminism is about analysing women’s experience of “subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it.” That is to say, feminists analyse the law to unmask various ways in which the law has “privileged” men at the expense of women. In corroborating this view, Cain states that:

Uncovering the ways in which law has privileged male over female is the immediate goal of much feminist legal writing. Listening to women is an essential step in this project.

From the above, it is safe to state that the aim of the feminist legal thinkers is first, to deconstruct the law to show that it’s gender-neutral, objective, consistent, dispassionate and rational is a myth and not a reality. Second, to investigate the law from the standpoint of women so as to expose subordination and imposed inferiority. It is against this backdrop that feminist legal theorists have adopted methodological tools known as “feminist legal method (FLM).” Thus, the FLM is an approach founded on women’s experience of exclusion. It aids integrate women’s practical life experience into decision-making processes. In the words of McClain, “Feminist jurisprudence has sought to bring the experience and voice of women to the jurisprudential enterprise…” The FLM comprise of 3 main elements namely: “asking the woman question”, “feminist practical reasoning” and “consciousness-raising.”

In rationalizing and defining these elements, Clougherty, drawing from Bartlett, clearly explains the ways in which feminist legal theorists utilize the FLM. On “asking the
woman question" which this paper describes as an investigative tool, Clougherty notes that feminists use this method to unmask any form of bias implicitly made against women in decision-making process even where such process appears to be gender-neutral. By employing this tool, feminists investigate decision-making processes to see if they will impact on women’s lives in the real world. To justify this tool, feminists’ have raised important questions namely: “What would the law be like if women had been considered by drafters and interpreters of the law?” “How can future policy-making be informed by the excluded voices and perspectives of those at the bottom of the political, economic, or patriarchal social hierarchy?” Where the response to the above “woman questions” suggests any form of bias, this will mean that decision-making processes are indeed gender-bias and need to be transformed.

Concerning “feminist practical reasoning,” which this paper describes as a corrective and an integrative tool it focuses on women’s reality. This tool can be used by decision-makers to: 1) review existing laws, 2) take into consideration “issues that negatively affects women,” and 3) acknowledge and incorporate the standpoint of women that may be revealed by consciousness-raising (which I explain below) during decision-making processes. “Consciousness-raising”, which this paper describes as an assessment tool, can be used by decision-makers in practice to identify the impact of decision-making processes on women. The objective of this tool is to give decision-makers 1) the opportunity to hear women tell their life stories (in this case, energy-related) as it hurt, and 2) the ability to eliminate any form of bias made against women or capable of rendering a decision-making process gender-bias. In summarising the rationale behind these methodological tools, Fineman points out that they represent the integration of theory and practice. This suggests that where these tools which have the same characteristics as GAT are successfully realized and utilized, it can serve as a framework for the formulation of decision-making processes that may be considered in practice as gender-neutral.

In contributing to the above, feminist historian, Schiebinger opines that it is not enough to understand the making of science rather, what is needed is to develop and adopt more constructive and practical ways to employ gender analysis tools. Achieving this will bring about a “sustainable science.” Furthermore, “only when gender analysis becomes an integral part of science research programs will the problem of women in science be solved.” From the above it is safe to state that the adoption of mechanisms such as GAT has long been recognised by feminists. Drawing from Schiebinger, it is the opinion of this

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19 Clougherty, “Feminist Legal Methods and the First Amendment,” at 7.
22 Clougherty, “Feminist Legal Methods and the First Amendment,” 10 (Feminist practical reasoning can be used to correct bias made against women during decision-making processes).
24 Consciousness-raising
writer that a decision making process can also be described as a science. Going by this line of reasoning, this means that where decision-makers employ a gender analysis mechanism as an integral part of energy decision-making process, this can significantly contribute to addressing the perennial socio-economic challenges faced by rural women in Nigeria.\(^{28}\)

Consequently, feminists are of a common view that: 1) analysing women’s experience in decision-making processes and nothing less is required to ensure that their interest and concerns are included before decisions are passed,\(^{29}\) 2) civilization and society have put women in a subordinated position to and by men,\(^{30}\) and 3) if women are included in societal activities “life would be better, certainly for women...”\(^{31}\) The paper proceeds to introduce rural women while focusing on why energy is a woman’s issue.

### 2.0 Introducing Rural Women: Why Energy is a Woman’s Issue

Affordable access to modern and sustainable energy service is necessary for human well-being and a key component to attaining sustainable development. This implies that a sustainable energy system can bring about fundamental change to a nation’s environmental, social and economic development. However, one major challenge to attaining sustainable development in Nigeria will be to find ways to operationalize it.\(^{32}\) In the context of this paper, operationalizing sustainable development begins with recognizing that: 1) energy is the magnet that holds other sustainable development goals, 2) energy is foundational to achieving sustainable rural development, and 3) rural women are at the receiving end of energy issues and their ability to access sustainable energy will bring about transformation to their well-being and rural development.\(^{33}\)

As documented by the 2006 national census, women in Nigeria account for 52 percent of the total population of which 45 percent live in rural communities.\(^{34}\) Rural women in Nigeria generally play an important role in energy production, use and management as they are saddled with the responsibility of accessing and satisfying the daily energy needs of their family and community. As a result, "they experience energy poverty differently and more severely than men."\(^{35}\) Although, rural women are presumed to be mostly involved in

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\(^{31}\) Ibid, 2.


the activities of the informal sector, their contribution to the country’s economic growth cannot be overstated. Their activities revolve around home management, food producing, subsistence farming, and entrepreneurs. Since most of their time is spent in the forest on a daily basis sourcing for water, fuel, carrying out agricultural activities and making use of natural products for medicinal and economic purposes they have a relationship with their natural environment.

To address home management activities, rural women need improved access to energy services within households to satisfy basic human needs such as: pumping drinking water, washing, cooking, boiling water, lighting, heating and for the preparation of traditional medicines (usually used in place of a conventional health care system). As noted by Cecelski, two activities that are mostly time-consuming for rural women are cooking and collecting firewood. Likewise, Barnett and Whiteside assert that the time devoted by rural women to carry out these activities is usually linked with the poverty level of most households. These views Adenugba and Raji-Mustapha corroborate by showing that in most rural households in Nigeria, women spend a minimum of two hours each day collecting firewood. For instance, 86 percent of women interviewed in Tofa local government area of Kano State, Nigeria are reported to spend time using crop waste and firewood as their main source of energy while 55 per cent of these women depend on other energy sources such as kerosene, charcoal, etc.

To this end, Warren points out that ongoing developmental projects fail to address women’s issues which include: their need for an alternative method

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36 This is so because rural women spend a lot of their time on unpaid family activities. In addition, since these women are usually not educated they sometimes take up menial jobs were they are paid little or nothing.

37 Rural Women engage in unpaid tasks which include: care giving, cooking, cleaning, washing, raising children, voluntary community services, gathering and carrying firewood as well as fetching water.


39 Rural women are involved in food processing etc., (for example, fish smoking, palm oil, gari and rice production etc.)

40 Mainly derived from traditional biomass eg. firewood, agriculture waste and animal waste


43 Ijoma, “Giving Women a Voice.”

44 Cecelski, “Energy and Rural Women’s Work,” 44.

45 Such activities include, gathering fuelwood and water, housework, cooking, child care etc.


of cooking and as a result they have no choice but to use low-quality fuel thus, increasing the time spent for cooking.49

Concerning agricultural activities, in 2011, a report of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reveals that over 50 percent of Nigerian women contribute to agricultural activities50 which include: farming, forestry and fishing.51 Also, 80 percent of food items consumed in Nigeria are produced by rural women.52 As entrepreneurs, women primarily control fishing and agricultural activities which they produce, process, distribute and market to end users.53 However, due to the substandard quality fuel available to them they continue to engage in primitive agriculture54 and food processing methods and as a result, they spend back-breaking hours carrying out these activities. For example, existing studies show that while rural women in Nigeria spend 540mins/day in agricultural activities, their male folks spend 420mins/day.55 Although, it has been proven that modern and efficient energy mechanized graters lead to the reduction of time needed to grate gari from one day to 15 minutes, the inability of rural women in Nigeria to afford to own such an equipment results to socio-economic loss.56 In this regard, Cecelski argues that many labour-saving technologies have not only failed to save the time and energy of women, but they have also been able to worsen their social and economic conditions.57 This, feminists describe as the “feminization of poverty.”58

Warren asserts that feminist issues which by its definition is synonymous to women’s issues means any act that presents an understanding of women’s experience of exclusion.59 She perceives gender disparity, domestic chores such as cooking, gathering and carrying


firewood, fetching water, glass ceiling and burning charcoal as women’s issues. What does this imply for rural women? Where rural women continue to use biomass resources as their primary source of energy they remain confronted with harsh realities of social, economic, environmental and health impact and as a result their potentials to pursue a quality life that is free and fulfilling becomes limited. The following sub-section(s) further investigates women’s issues to expose resulting socio-economic consequences with the aim of advocating for a transformation.

2.1 Social Consequences and the Role of Energy

The stark reality is that where rural women are confronted with lack of access to sustainable energy services, it can bring about social exclusion which in turn can impede their ability to contribute fully to the development of rural economy. Social exclusion includes rural women’s inability to access basic amenities that are necessary to reducing drudgery, poverty, hunger etc such as: portable water, education, maternity/health care system, a healthy environment, autonomy and dignity. Social exclusion leads to lack of self-confident, a productive and meaningful life.

Regarding portable water, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) report finds that access to safe and portable water is a major problem in Nigeria. As part of rural women’s gender roles, they are responsible for accessing and boiling water which requires energy services. In most cases, they have to trek far distance to satisfy domestic and commercial water supply. For example, the UNICEF report shows that compared to 33 percent in the urban communities 69 percent of the rural communities lack access to safe drinking water. Also, data from the National Bureau of Statistics shows that water in rural areas is gotten from unhealthy sources like wells, rivers or lakes leading to various water-related diseases. This means that apart from the time spent by rural women sourcing water, they are also confronted with increased burdens of child health care and morbidity related to water-borne disease. By integrating women into energy policies and interventions, they can become skilled to easily access safe and portable water. This can help reduce women’s drudgery while allowing them to participate in other productive activities.

With respect to education, many women and girl-children do not have the basic literacy because of their roles as gatherers and carriers of fuelwood and water. As a result, they are relegated to the background when men which feminist describe as the ruling class make decisions. This is in line with a study carried out by the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, which finding reveals that gender disparity between boys and girls participation in education is

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60 Warren, “Towards AN Ecofeminist Ethics,” 142.


66 Such as cholera, dysentery, and diarrhoea

exists because 1) the male gender is regarded as superior, and 2) females’ experience of subordination. 68 This position has been reaffirmed by African leaders (including Nigeria) at the Pan-African Conference on the education of girls held at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. 69 Also, in 2011, a World Bank report on Nigeria records that most women are engaged in agricultural activities and as a result, fewer females are enrolled in schools compared to their male counterparts. 70 Where modern and reliable energy is lacking, attracting teachers to rural communities become difficult and women’s security becomes uncertain. For instance, due to unavailable access to energy, on the night of April 14, 2014, 276 female students were abducted from a government secondary school in the village of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria by members of Islamic terrorist known as Boko Haram. 72 This experience will remain devastating for the girls involved.

Health wise, women experience disparities as a result of food and waterborne diseases as well as indoor air pollution. Scarcity in traditional biomass can cause women to cook at best, once a day. In other cases they survive on partially cooked meals or leftover food. Where water is boiled and food is cooked, it has its health benefit particularly for growing children who need a number of nutrients contained in cooked meals. 73 The reverse implies malnutrition and other diseases which can contribute to child mortality. For example, a 2015 United Nations report shows that 36.5 percent of Nigerian children under the age of 5 suffer from malnutrition. This can be said to be high when compared to countries like Senegal having a percentage of 19.2 and South Africa 23.9 respectively. 74 Furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO) documents that smoke from indoors inefficient cooking stoves fueled by agricultural crop waste, wood, charcoal, and animal dung kills over 4 million people in the world every year. 75 In the case of Nigeria, over 98,000 women 66 and 85,000 children (under the age 5) 77 are reported to die yearly. More so, gathering and carrying firewood is a physical draining chore that causes rural women to suffer spinal damage


71 In this case electricity.


75 World Health Organization, “Household Air Pollution and Health,” last modified February, 2016, http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs292/en/ (The WHO report shows that children and women are affected disproportionately as they suffer diseases such as lung cancer, pneumonia, stroke and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder which in most cases cost them their lives).


77 Gwenaelle, Legros, Ines Havet, Nigel Bruce and Sophie Bonjour, The Energy Access Situation in Developing Countries: A review Focusing on the Least Developed Countries and Sub-Saharan Africa (New York: UNDP & WHO, 2009), 54
leading to problems with childbearing. Despite this health experiences, most health care systems in the rural areas lack necessary electricity to make them functional. Due to lack of access to electricity in health care centres medical practitioners are not attracted to rural communities and as a result, rural women continue to face poor maternal health conditions.

Rural women are also at the receiving end of all forms of environmental degradation due to the poor energy system. Apart from the fact that the use of agricultural and animal waste negatively impacts land fertility, some authors have argued that the use of traditional biomass such as firewood and charcoal leads to deforestation, desertification, loss of habitat, biodiversity and climate change. Arguing differently, Dankelman and Davidson assert that rural women cannot be responsible for deforestation because the woods they gather and use as energy are dead branches usually found on the ground. However, Agarwal notes that in certain occasions, women have had to cut green branches. According to her, this occurs where a conflict arises between preservation of the environment and human-related survival; particularly were children who cannot withhold hunger are involved.

2.2 Economic Consequences and the Role of Energy

With increasing globalization where the world’s economic growth is driven by energy, the consequences and impact of lack of access to reliable, affordable and sustainable energy will be tragic and directly felt by more women particularly those in the rural communities. In the rural communities for economic growth, energy is needed for mechanical powered agriculture, irrigation, community services and commercial enterprise. It is also required for agro-processing, storage and transportation. In Nigeria, 77 percent of households are headed by women and these women play a significant role in the rural economy of a developing nation like Nigeria. For example, in 2009, small-scale subsistence farming contributed 36.6 percent to Nigeria’s Gross Domestic Product. This means that rural women contribute greatly to the nation’s economic growth. Integrating rural women’s

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78 Dankeman and Davidson, *Women and Environment in the Third World*, 69.


80 On the 10th of July, 2016 during the Nigeria Channels T.V (10:00pm) news one of the residence of the Obayantor community in Edo State, Nigeria while appealing to the government for an adequate health care system reported that a lot of their women die during child birth.


85 FAO, “Energy for Agriculture.”


88 As revealed by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2011.
interest, needs and priorities in energy decision-making process is essential to empowering and facilitating their contribution to sustainable rural development and reduction of rural poverty. The current process of globalization namely, liberalization of international trade, commercialization of agriculture and markets for agricultural products has affected rural development.\textsuperscript{89} Although, this form of development has brought gains to Nigeria’s economy, it cannot be ignored that it has brought with it increasing challenges for women.

Where women’s participation in energy decision-making process are not taken into consideration, “they continue to face serious challenges in effectively carrying out their multiple roles within their families and communities”\textsuperscript{90} leading to exploitation and marginalization. Marginalization means excluding disadvantaged individuals (oppressed) from accessing economic resources or participating in social and other forms of societal activities that prevent them from exploring their potential in such a way that they feel fulfilled.\textsuperscript{91} It has been described by feminists as an unequal power relation between differing genders. Where women are marginalized, it is impossible for them to access resources that are necessary to implementing their perspective.\textsuperscript{92} In Nigeria rural women experience this form of marginalization as a result of lack of access to energy.

Prior to globalization, production activities in the agrarian sector were relatively minimal compared to the era of globalization. Since this was the case, power was mainly generated by non-mechanical devices, essentially, human and animal forces.\textsuperscript{93} However, with the era of globalization, due to inaccessible mechanized food processors and provision for powered agricultural equipment, women continue to use hoe technology\textsuperscript{94} to carry out their agricultural tasks.\textsuperscript{95} Studies show that Nigerian women spend up to 2 to 3 hours every day threshing and pounding grains.\textsuperscript{96} While, processing a drum of oil palm fruit requires 82 women per hour, women need 48 hours of a week to process cassava where there is no grating machine. Graters that can grind a bowl of cassava in one minute compared to hours by hand are reported to be available in 5 percent of rural communities in Imo State, Nigeria.\textsuperscript{97}

To address rural women’s exploitation in Nigeria, feminists advocate that decision-makers need to make more than a necessary effort to ask the “woman question” among other feminists methodological tools mentioned earlier. In Emeagwali words, “the woman question should be seen as fundamentally related to the infrastructural conditions and environment at specific periods in the transformation of the production process.”\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{89} UN, \textit{Rural Women in a Changing World}, 2.
\textsuperscript{90} UN, \textit{Rural Women in a Changing World}, 3.
\textsuperscript{94} Manual tools.
\textsuperscript{95} For example, harvesting and weeding.
\textsuperscript{96} Kes and Swaminathan, “Gender & Time Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa,” 18.
\textsuperscript{97} Kes and Swaminathan, “Gender & Time Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa,” 23.
\textsuperscript{98} Emeagwali, “Women in Pre-capitalist Socio-Economic Formations in Nigeria,” 52
historical standpoint, she argues that women’s socio-economic roles and contributions are usually neglected by the dominant ruling class who fail to recognise the “activities of women as members of the producer class.” Thus, calling for decision-makers to “ask the woman question” by adopting GAT in energy decision-making.

Guided by the FLM, the next section argues for the adoption and utilization of GAT by the Nigerian government. In so doing, it shows how and why rural women can be integrated into energy decision-making processes. It thereafter examines the international framework(s) supporting the adoption and utilization of GAT.

3.0 Part III: Integrating Rural Women in Energy Decision-Making Process for Sustainable Rural Development

3.1 First Thing First: Adopting a Gender Analysis Tool

Gender analysis is a part of socio-economic analysis that exposes unequal gender relations and various developmental challenges that need to be addressed. Unequal gender relations can be a hindrance to rural women’s ability to participate and voice out their energy concerns and priorities at all levels of decision-making processes. Although, when compared to men, women are more severely impacted during energy crisis due to their distinct gender roles and responsibilities, women’s energy needs receive very little attention because in theory energy policies are deemed to be gender-neutral while in reality they remain gender-blind. Hence, the need to adopt a gender analysis tool (GAT) in practice. By GAT I mean a data-gathering tool that provides decision-makers with useful information for understanding gender-energy differences as it exists in a country’s specific context when formulating energy policies and strategies. The aim of GAT is to bridge the gender gap that exists between men and women in energy decision-making processes while promoting gender equality. It’s useful when considering the negative and positive socio-economic impact of energy policies and programmes on females and males. By utilizing this tool, rural women will be given an opportunity to participate reasonably in energy decision-making processes. Participation includes analysing and integrating their energy needs and experiences into energy interventions. This is important because, “Without data, there is no visibility, without visibility, there is no priority”.

Advantages of adopting and utilizing GAT at an early stage of planning a project design or policy formulation are: 1) decision-makers will quickly recognise gaps and find necessary solutions to a successful implementation and 2) women’s participation in energy decision-making process can help shape the contents of energy policies and strategies that

100 C. Ndungo, C. Masinga, I. Bekalo, W.O Ochola and R. A. Mwonya, “Gender and Natural Resources Management,” in Managing Natural Resources for Development in Africa: A Resources Book, eds. Washington Ochola, Pascal Sanginga, Isaac Bekalo (Nairobi, University of Nairobi Press, 2010), 236. See also, Hunt, “Introduction to gender analysis,” 139 (Gender relations means the social and economic relations that exist between women and men which are socially construed).
101 Women need energy both for reproductive and productive activities.


translates to sustainable rural development and ultimately national economic growth. By including women as partners in energy sector intervention, they have a tendency to influence energy production and consumption in reality. This is so because women are saddled with the responsibility of shaping their children’s energy consumption and conservation habits. Thus, addressing policy weaknesses require the full and equal participation of women among other stakeholders. The reality is that until rural women’s perspective are integrated and their socio-economic contribution is supported and recognised, progress towards effectively attaining sustainable development may remain incomplete.

In Nigeria, the main document that serves as a tool for integrating gender in decision making processes is the Nigerian Constitution. Although, in section 15, the constitution appears to be gender-focused, regrettably, this section which falls within the scope of Chapter II of the Constitution is non-justiciable and as such cannot be litigated upon. In line with feminists’, this implies that where female citizens are not integrated for any reason whatsoever the only option available to them is silence and continuous marginalization.

3.2 Obstacles

- **Gender unawareness**: where rural women are unaware of the socio-economic consequences of their gender roles it can be an obstacle to their level of participation. It is important to create necessary awareness.

- **Lack of expertise and training of officials who will use the tool** can be a barrier to achieving the desired result. Untrained and inexperienced interviewers may limit the effect and efficient use of GAT.

- **Lack of basic instruments that can be used to monitor and measure gender indicators** can be an obstacle.

- **It can be considered a time-consuming process** by women who are already consumed with their gender roles and by decision-makers who may think the process as complex and uncertain, resulting to a reluctance to apply it.

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106 Cecelski, *The Role of Women in Sustainable Energy Development*, 10

107 Such as Financial institutions, energy generators, distributors and Transmitters, technology manufacturers etc.


109 Sec 15 (2) provides that “… national integration shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited.”

110 Ibid (provides for the “Fundamental Objectives and Directives Principles of State Policy” The Chapter also provides for socio-economic rights).

111 Ibid, sec 6(6) (c) (provides that judicial powers shall not, except as otherwise provided by the Constitution extend to matters within Chapter II). See also, Ijoma, “Decision-Making Process Towards Achieving Environmental Sustainability.”

112 However, in the case of Archbishop Anthony Olubunmi Okojie v Attorney General of Lagos State, [1981]; NCLR 220 (HC), matters under chapter II which include sec. 15 have been held to be justiciable.

113 Ijoma, “Giving Women a Voice.”

114 Ijoma, “Decision-Making Process Towards Achieving Environmental Sustainability. Also, in section 42(2) the Constitution provides that “No Citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his [Emphasis Added] birth”. However, by using a masculine pronoun his in the above provision without having it explained at the interpretation section of the Constitution (see, section 318) to include female and male, the Constitution appears to be gender-insensitive as it excludes women from “the benefits of this provision.”

3.3 International Frameworks for Analysing Gender

Similar to regional frameworks\textsuperscript{116} which takes cognizance of the fact that reducing household burdens shouldered by rural women,\textsuperscript{117} require the establishment of mechanisms for the integration of women in developmental programmes both at the national and sub-national levels,\textsuperscript{118} international frameworks also makes necessary and revealing provisions. For instance, with the aim of ending unfair and differential treatment made against poor girls and women living in the rural areas, on the 18\textsuperscript{th} of December 1979, the United Nations accepted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In 1992, at the summit on the economic advancement of rural women the Geneva Declaration for Rural Women\textsuperscript{119} was adopted by the wives of Heads of States.\textsuperscript{120} At the summit, the wives recognised and brought to the knowledge of decision-makers that rural women are faced with poor socio-economic conditions.\textsuperscript{121} For rural women to attain socio-economic advancement and improve the welfare of rural development, one of the strategies recommended is for governments at all levels to change their policies and programmes to address and integrate the issues of women into development projects like technologies for alternative energy sources.\textsuperscript{122} They note that achieving this requires establishing a resilient mechanism for training policy-makers and field workers on ways of analysing gender namely: collecting and analysing national, regional and local data. In their view, “these will aid policy makers and project designers in assessing the socio-economic conditions of rural women.”\textsuperscript{123}

Three years later, in 1995 at the fourth world conference on women held at Beijing, national governments’ gathered together recognising that inequalities between women and men persists and remains an obstacle for development.\textsuperscript{124} States Parties recognised that eradicating poverty, achieving the three components of sustainable development\textsuperscript{125} and social justice requires the equal participation of women in socio-economic development.\textsuperscript{126} Furthermore, women should be given equal access to the development of sustainable and affordable energy technologies\textsuperscript{127} through the use of “participatory needs assessment” to design national energy policies and plans.\textsuperscript{128} They note that women’s participation begins


\textsuperscript{117} Ibid, 86, para 302.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid, 86, para 299.


\textsuperscript{120} From Africa, Asia, Oceania, Europe and America.

\textsuperscript{121} UN, Geneva Declaration, Para 1.

\textsuperscript{122} UN, Geneva Declaration, Para 13 (ix).

\textsuperscript{123} UN, Geneva Declaration, Para 13 (iv).

\textsuperscript{124} UN, Report of the Fourth World, Para 1, 2, 4-5.

\textsuperscript{125} Environmental Protection, Sustained Economic Growth and Social Development.

\textsuperscript{126} UN, Report of the Fourth World, Para 16.

\textsuperscript{127} Such as Renewable Energy Technologies.

with analysing and integrating gender in a wide range of programmes and policies (including energy).129

Conclusion

In conclusion, empowering rural women for a socially inclusive economic growth starts from analysing and integrating their voices, needs, interest, experience and priorities in energy decision-making processes. There may be no hope towards attaining all the sustainable development goals in Nigeria until decision-makers begin to recognise the full and equal participation and contribution of rural women to the country’s economic development. Finally, regarding women as partners in the energy sector and not mere consumers or beneficiaries remains germane to Sustainable Rural Development.

129 UN, Report of the Fourth World, Para 47.
REFERENCE LIST


Constitution of Nigeria (1999), c C23


