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POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS IN ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN RURAL AREAS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Ineffective implementation of gender-based policy to address gender-based violence has been responsible for gender inequalities prevalent in rural areas in Nigeria. This is occasioned by the lack of policy mainstreaming and patriarchy culture of Nigerian societies with inherent cultural and societal barriers in the form of discrimination against women. This can be seen in key sectors such as the economy, politics, families and communities. The study addressed the following issues: Forms of gender-based violence in rural areas, gaps in implementation of gender-based policy, how policy frameworks can effectively address gender-based violence in rural areas, measures on how to promote women's empowerment and their equal participation in social, economic and political activities and identification of stakeholders and other civil society for partnership towards gender mainstreaming. This study adopts a critical analysis to explore information concerning the aims of the study. The investigation reveals that there are various forms of policy frameworks but the problem lies in the implementation. Further investigation shows that policy frameworks are the necessary instrument that can effectively address gender-based violence in rural areas through stakeholders' collaboration. It has been concluded that stakeholders have roles to play towards setting procedures and goals that will guide policy implementation. Through this, gender-based violence will be effectively addressed.

Keyword: Policy, Frameworks, effectiveness, gender-based violence, rural, communities

INTRODUCTION

Rural area in Nigeria is an area that is far away from the seat of government with a unique ecological niche. It is an area known for limited social amenities and pervasive poverty. The main stay of the economic activities in the area is agriculture due to its agrarian nature. It is also an area that is known for food production and other cash crops which constitutes part of the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of the nation. Rural communities in Nigeria have been bedeviled with numerous problems. One of such problems is gender-based violence. When we talk about gender-based violence, we are referring to any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty (Inter-Agency Network for Education and Emergency, 2019)

Incidence of violence in rural area manifests in families, agriculture, market system and politics. World Bank development indicators show that women make up 49.32% of Nigeria's population, meaning almost half of the Nigerian people are women. Despite this colossal figure, female representation in decision-making has been abysmally low since Nigeria's return to democracy

in 1999. In 2023 election, female's representation is 8.9% lower than 12.9 % in 2019 (Osaruonamen, 2023).

Nigeria became a signatory to the world Conference on women in Beijing, in 1995. During the conference, 30 per cent affirmative action and National Gender Policy (NGP) recommended 35 per cent affirmative action for more inclusive representation of women both in elective and appointive positions. National gender policy (NGP) was developed in Nigeria to replace National Policy on women as an attempt to eliminate all forms bearers, promote gender equality and reduce poverty among women not through economic empowerment alone but by empowering women through income generating activities and guaranteeing their ownership of productive assets(Ijeoma Thomas-Odia, 2023). Gender mainstreaming was identified as one of the ways to encourage gender equality. This was also seen as a means to improve the quality of public policies, programmes and projects that will ensure efficient allocation of resources. Gender Mainstreaming ensures that policy making in legislative work is of higher quality and has greater relevance in the society, responding to the needs of the men, women, boys, and girls. Policy mainstreaming makes public intervention more effective and ensures that inequalities are not allowed to continue to perpetuate. It is therefore expedient that gender policies framework be developed and applied at the rural communities in Nigeria

The wide spread of gender-based violence in rural communities can be seen from policy gap and lack of mainstreaming to guide and direct actionable plans that will bring about equality in rural communities. This is part of the reason why African Union gender policy framework was designed to encourage democracy, gender equality, human rights, and dignity. Also, to recognize the equal status of women and men; girls and boys, with both sexes, to thrive together harmoniously, in a peaceful and secure environment with equal opportunities. Most gender-based policies that exist only exist on paper without programs and legal framework to drive them. Most rural dwellers do not consider some gender abuses as a crime; rather, it is seen as trivial issues. This will lead to a continuous exacerbation of gender-based violence in rural communities. This is further compounded by a patriarchal culture where women are marginalized and are conditioned to play subordinate roles.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a critical analysis to explore information concerning the policy effectiveness in addressing gender-based violence. Scholarly published articles that are related to gender policies and rural development issues were critically analyzed. Feminist perspective was used as the framework to underpin the study. The analyses took into consideration policies such as African Union Policy framework, Agricultural promotion Policy and Nigeria National Policy in Agriculture.

3.3 Why policy framework?

There is a need to provide a brief understanding of what a policy framework is, as it relates to gender-based violence. Policy framework has to do with lay down guidelines, regulations and principles established by governments or development partners to guide decision-making and implement strategies in fighting against gender-based violence in rural communities in Nigeria. Through Policy framework and the involvement of the key actors working in collaboration with the community leaders will create an enabling environment for the eradication of gender-based violence (GBV) and inculcate respect, protection, promotion and fulfillment of human rights. Policy framework provides assistance for the various institutions that want to address gender-based violence issues and also to provide a monitoring and evaluating instruments to ascertain how policy framework is been implemented.

The scope of the policy framework is the entire rural communities in Nigeria. This framework will take a look at the social structure and the power relations as it affects men and women; boys and girls. It will also be applied in the various occupations or economic activities of the rural dwellers, access to family and community resources. The various forms of gender-based

abuses will be factored into the framed with physical violence, deprivation, suppression and discrimination inclusive. This will help to understand the dynamics of the nature of abuses that are prevalent. While women are most frequently the victims of these particular forms of GBV, the Policy Framework recognizes that men are also subject to these harms, as well as LGBTQI individuals.

There are a lot of gender-based policies that were designed the curb gender-based violence in rural communities and to promote gender responsiveness among rural dwellers. One of such policies is Nigeria National Policy in Agriculture. This policy was formulated in 2014 as a sectoral gender mainstreaming strategy document to complement existing policies in agriculture sector. The rationale for this policy was the fill the gender gap identified during the administration of President Muhammad Buhari's Agricultural Transformation Agenda. The main goal of the policy was to promote gender integration and responsiveness.

A typical example of a policy document is the national gender policy in Agriculture. The document conveys that the policy document is to promote and ensure the adoption of gender sensitive and responsive approaches towards engendering plans and programmes in such a way that men and women will have access to and control of productive resources such as raw material, land, labour and facilities to narrow gender gaps. The policy document will enhance the platform to build an agri-business ecosystem to meet both domestic and foreign demands to achieve food security and accelerated development. The national policy on gender in agriculture is expected to drastically reduce the vulnerability of women to biases in agriculture, address the unequal gender power relation and bridge gender gap. The contributions of Small Holder Farmers who are predominantly women is huge yet, their access base to Agricultural assets is low. Gender inequalities limit agricultural productivity and efficiency and in so doing, undermine development agendas. Failure to recognize the different roles of women and men is costly because it results in misguided projects and programmes, foregone agricultural output and incomes, as well as food and nutrition insecurity. It is therefore time to take into account the critical contribution and role of women in agricultural production in order to move women, as the main farmers and producers in many parts of the world, including Nigeria, beyond production for subsistence into higher value, market oriented production. (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2016)

Another policy that is related to rural development is Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP). This policy was designed to promote agricultural activities by meeting up with food requirements and to export at levels required for market success. This policy was faced with challenges due to its inability to meet domestic food requirements and inability to export at levels required for market success. This policy failed because of lack of proper framework to guide, direct and provide what was needed to implement the policy. The enormous challenges ranges from inefficient input system and farming model, lack of seeds, fertilizers, irrigation, crop protection, storage facilities and other militating factors. These challenges were attributed to a weak inspectorate system in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), and poor coordination among relevant agency (FMARD, 2016)

Gender policy framework and its effectiveness in addressing GBV

Gender policy is a statement of action to integrate gender in the mainstream of activities in rural areas by putting in place institutional arrangements, assigning responsibilities and providing the necessary tools/ guidelines for mainstreaming. Policy Mainstreaming helps to apply the gender policy in rural communities. This can be achieved by putting planned actions including legislation, policies or programmes in all the areas affecting men and women. Policy mainstream do not only put men and women in the design structure of the policy but provides a monitoring and evaluation mechanism that will accelerate gender relations where opportunities, privileges and responsibilities are shared on equal basis.

The policy framework will cover the following thematic areas

Framework of Building gender competence of the advocates of gender equality

Before a policy is formulated, there is a need for the staff in charge of policy formulation to be trained on the sensitive gender issues, to create awareness, and to enable them understand the details and the intricacies involved in gender-based violence. It is also expedient that the cultural practices of the rural communities be studied to understand their power structure, managerial skills, personal skills, leadership experience and to ensure that there is gender sensitivity in key positions at the community.

Framework of the Nature of gender-base violence prevalent at the community

The framework will also highlight the various gender-based abuses and their causes. Organizations involved in fighting gender issues should identify the root cause(s) of such violence and seek for a way of mitigating them. The approach should be holistic in nature to show concern to gender issues that affect men and women, boys and girls, married and singled, employed and unemployed. Gender-based violence can be attributed to poor policy implementation, unjust power dynamics, patriarchal cultural norms and laws that promote gender discrimination. Findings revealed that 35 per cent of women worldwide have gone through physical or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence (DOE,2018).

Framework of inclusiveness in the family/community decision making process

The framework will provide support in the form of training of rural dwellers on the need for inclusive decision making so that the vulnerable ones will not be sidelined from critical decisions making process that will make their voices to be heard. Different decisions are taken in the family and at the community level. Such decisions include: Who to marry, how many children he or she wants to born, type of income generating business to do, type of school to attend, type of house property to buy like car, the type of school you want your child to attend, and other critical decisions that may affect their lives.

Framework of institutionalizing gender responsive programming

To address gender-based issues, different stakeholders need to be brought together for synergy. These stakeholders will constitute government officials, Community-Based Associations (CBAs), Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), individuals, community leaders and other development partners.

The different stakeholders will play complementary roles to ensure they create gender-based responsive rural communities. This will work better because of the engagement of the community leaders and other individuals. This approach is essential in reducing gender-based violence at the community level. This claim is based on the fact that rural areas are homogenous in nature, at such provides the rural dwellers the opportunity to know each other. With this knitted close relationship, it is easy to identify the offenders of gender-based violence and at the same time save the lives of the victims. In some communities where land is communally owned, women who are interested in agriculture are being allocated land for farming. This will help women to be self-reliant and productive. Families and communities will be encouraged to adopt inclusive approach in the decision making process. This will create enabling play ground for participation of men and women in critical decisions that will impact positive on each of them. When people have equal right to participate in family and community issues, it will bring fulfilment in the individuals thus, creating an egalitarian society.

The explicit collaborative efforts of development partners, NGOs and CBOs, to engage men and boys to challenge patriarchal norms will encourage a gender responsive culture. This is done with some targeted activities to empower women and girls. This approach was introduced by Byrd in 2007(McComb and Boyd,2016). The emphasis was the role played by stakeholders towards development to be achieved, there is a need for partnership from various individuals, community members, philanthropist, government, agencies, international organizations and

financial institutions (Ukah and e tal, 2023). This engagement of men and boys to challenge GBV will increase their understanding and shape their behavior to challenge unequal power relations and reduction of women's vulnerability to various forms of violence because of changes in power relations and division of tasks within a household or community. Discrimination in agriculture is quite complex and diverse due to its allied market system (Greig 2020). This segment of framework will also be helpful to empower men and women through the activities aiming to enlighten them and other at-risk groups to avoid putting them at great risk of violence.

The development partners and NGOs need to develop men, women, boys and girls in how to actively participate in decision making processes of the community governance structure, leadership, conflict resolution and other skills development. This will increase their capacity and build confidence in them.

The proper framework and mainstreaming of Agricultural Promotion Policy in rural areas in Nigeria will be an effective strategy in fighting gender-based violence in rural areas where agriculture is their mainstay of their economy. If the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development assume their full involvement in the mainstreaming of this policy in rural agriculture, it will be potent to address gender issues in agricultural sector in rural communities thereby impacting positively on food production and distribution. This is also critical in rural development as this policy will reduce poverty among men and women which is goal number-1 of sustainable Development Goals. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and other supportive agencies must work assiduously to provide farm inputs such as seedlings, insecticide, pesticide and fertilizer for rural farmers. Irrigational system needs to be developed in rural areas to encourage all year round cultivation, training of famers on market system and storage facilities. The provision of the above requirements must be done in an inclusive and gender responsive manner.

This policy has far reaching implication on the rural economy. In order to provide food security and reduce rural poverty, the approach must be policy driven, pragmatic and action-oriented. The livelihood of the rural people revolves round their environment. It is therefore expedient that what both men and women do to earn a living is being looked into to see where they can be helped. Through this approach, hunger will be minimized. By addressing these issues SDGs goal number 2 - elimination of hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and sustainable agriculture and goal number 5 which is achieving equality and empowerment for women and girls are addressed.

Framework on policy implementation

Every policy requires programmes to drive them. In achieving this phase of framework, the actors involved need to plan on how to implement the programme. This programme may take the form of empowerment in agriculture. The design for the empowerment must be inclusive. Inclusive in the sense that men, women, boys and girls are treated fairly. Other components to be considered in project implementation human resource management, cost management, quality management, risk management, monitoring and evaluation.

Framework of data gathering

It is necessary that stakeholders carry out an assessment of the nature of businesses that are been carried out in rural communities and available resources. This is so, to be able gauge exactly the areas where to offer assistance to the people. NOGs can conduct a community survey to ascertain the needs gap of the people. Data can also be gathered to determine gender-based violence prevalent in the rural areas. This will help them to put mechanism in place to address such gender issues. Data gathered can help in effective planning to create gender sensitivity policies, gender responsive planning, monitoring and evaluation and budget.

Gathering gender statistics is important in attracting intervention from the government and partners.

Framework of monitoring and evaluation

After setting mechanism in motion to challenge gender-based violence in rural areas, there is a need to follow up the activities of gender programmes. This is to ensure that the action plans that were designed to be accomplished are achieved. Impact analysis needs to be carried out to ascertain whether the programmes designed to drive gender-based violence have brought equality and gender responsive culture. Monitoring and evaluation provides strategic blue print to track positive and negative changes emerging from implementation. Programme implementers especially those involved in policies that are related to agricultural development and empowerment programmes, need to monitor and evaluate such programmes. The M&E unit of any government agency piloting such programmes must design a framework articulating how these activities will be carried out in order to achieve the desired result. Ministry of Agriculture and rural Development, development partners and NGOs who champion the cause of gender-based violence in rural communities in Nigeria have the role to play in this regard.

Theoretical frame work

Feminist perspective

Feminist perspective as a general thought system, acknowledges a system of unbalanced hierarchy between men and women in which women are almost always and universally exploited (Swirsky&Angelone, 2015; Walby, 1989). Despite the fact that there are differing factions of feminism (radical, liberal, black, Marxist/socialist) whose goals differ sometimes slightly and other times radically, all evidences however, points to a consensus that feminism as a movement aims to end the social domination of women by men, and in its place enthrone a system that inherently supports and maintains gender equality in the political, economic and socio-cultural spheres (Eteng, et al., 2021; Swirsky&Angelone, 2015; Tong, 2009). Women's marginalization and inequalities in Africa policy-making remains a fervent International discourse. This is attributed to restrictive laws cultural diversities and practices, institutional barriers, as well as disproportionate access to education and health care and resources (Oluwaloyin, 2018). It is important to note that the empowerment of women and their participation in all spheres of the society is fundamental for their overall development (Das-Gupta, 1987).

Policy biases against women in most developing countries tend to undervalue their work and accessibility to labour and market in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. Cultural factors have been known to impede efforts of women to overcome poverty. Women are subjugated to all manner of ideologies, rituals, indignities as well as practices and ceremonies that negatively impact their lives (Morris, 2005). For instance, Radical feminist thought, which marked the "second wave" of feminist ideology, blames the exploitation of women squarely on patriarchy (Eteng, et al., 2021; Haralambos, et al., 2008). However, achieving a balanced gender contribution is fraught with a series of challenges in view of the actual position of women and the challenges that prevent them from tunneling out and mainstreaming their knowledge, skills and experiences, thereby liberating them from being a marginalized, oppressed and subordinated group (Shankar, 2016).

RESULTS/DISCUSSIONS

The study examined policy framework and their effectiveness in addressing gender-based violence in rural areas in Nigeria. Deducing from the study, it has been revealed that there are various forms of policy frameworks. Some of such frameworks are National Gender Policy, to

reduce discrimination and oppressive practices against women. African Union Gender Policy Framework, to encourage women representation in government and other sectors in the society. National Policy on Gender in Agriculture to drastically reduce the vulnerability of women to biases in agriculture, address the unequal gender power relation and bridge gender gap. Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) is another policy that was identified that was formulated to promote agricultural activities by meeting up with food requirements and to export at levels required for market success. The rationale for these policies was to come out with implementable and actionable plans to improve the socio-economic status of both men and women in rural areas in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2016)

Through their engagements in Agricultural production, goods can be exported to boost their income earnings. Oluwaloyin (2018) maintained that it is pertinent that women are trained and improved upon to enable them participate in every sector of economy.

Some of the of the gender-based violence that were identified include denial of economic resources and opportunities, domestic violence, appropriation of money and resource, forced prostitution, emotional abuse, sexual harassment and many more (Department of Operations and Emergencies, 2018). It has been noted that gender-based violence are becoming wide spread and worrisome societal issues especially in rural communities due to gender-based policies gap and mainstreaming. These abuses and obnoxious practices were attributed to a patriarchal society ((Eteng, et al., 2021). This has been discovered to be a critical area that requires public intervention for effective elimination of inequalities in perpetuity.

In other to address gender-based violence through policy mainstreaming, the following strategies were explored: Framework on gender competence of the advocates of gender equality, framework of the nature of gender-based violence prevalent in rural communities in Nigeria, Framework of creating gender inclusive families and communities in decision making process, framework of institutionalizing gender responsive programming where both males and females will be educated on how to challenge inequalities around them. Framework of policy implementation which shows a breakdown of action plans to drive gender articulated programmes in order to address gender issues. Another aspect is a framework on data gathering which was discovered to be a crucial aspect of policy mainstreaming especially as it concerns communities. This will provide comprehensive information about the gender situation in a particular community and give room for planning. The last stage of policy mainstreaming is a framework of monitoring and evaluation. This is critical for feedback mechanism. This will also help to gauge if the goals intended to achieve have been accomplished.

Conclusion

The study identified the gaps in implementation of gender-based policies and came out with frameworks to address the gaps. It has been discovered that lack of policy implementation and mainstreaming are parts of the reasons why gender-based violence continue to exist in rural areas. This was exemplified by the analyses from three of the gender-based related policies which are African Union Gender Policy (AUGP), Nigeria National Policy in Agriculture (NNPA) and Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP). The policies have been dormant due to lack of effective implementation. To effectively address gender-based violence in rural communities in Nigeria, the following frameworks must be adhered to: Framework to train staff of governmental agencies that are fighting against gender-based violence to be gender competent. Framework to institutionalize gender programming, framework to implement gender-based programmes, framework to build an inclusive decision making process in families and communities, framework to gather data and information on gender issues to aid in planning and intervention and framework in monitoring and evaluation. The whole essence of implementing policy

framework is to mainstream gender policy in every aspect of the communities. Through this, the community members will become gender responsive and sensitive.

Recommendations/policy implications

1. All forms of obnoxious cultural practices should be eradicated by the government, human right advocates or women right protection advocates. Practices like female genital mutilation (FGM), wife battering, economic deprivation, and force marriage are abuses that can be minimized through effective policy mainstreaming. People will become aware of the sanctions that come with the policy and begin to adjust their ill behavior that is detrimental to others.

2. Government should provide what is required to implement policies. No policy can be effective if there is no government support. By implication, it means gender-based policy should clearly state the support structure ranging from training of staff, budget, and access to credit, supervision of gender-based programmes and reporting system.

3. There is a need for synergy among the stakeholders involved in the fight against gender-based violence. Every policy framework should clearly state the role each actor is expected to play. By so doing role conflict and conflict of interest will be avoided

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest from the authors any individual or any organization what so ever concerning this article.

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