TOWARDS EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN IN NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
In a country such as Nigeria, the education of women who constitute a greater majority of our national populace has become imperative for nation building. This paper discusses the status of women in the past and the changing roles to women in the modern society. The paper looks into the constraints or problems militating against woman's effective participation in nation building: and if these constraints are removed, women can have a place in the development of our country.

Introduction
In all countries of the world, education is now recognized as the main vehicle for promoting and improving the status of women. The new interest in the education of women is part of a general awakening that has taken place during the last two decades. People now realize that national human building cannot be effective if half of the human race (the women folk) remain ignorant, marginalised and discriminated against. Women constitute about 50 percent of human resources for development and yet the majority of them have been largely excluded from development in most countries of the world. In Nigeria, development could be slowed down if women do not participate fully, for the simple reason that they are the ones who produce crops in addition to their roles as mothers and wives. Thus, because of this close relationship between the status of women and the status of economic development in any country, it is believed that so long as some countries regard women as chattels, so long will their development be slow and painful. Women are, therefore, a valuable instrument for nation building, they will expedite development if properly harnessed and utilized.

Research findings have buttressed the point that women are essential ingredients for nation building. For instance, UNESCO (1980) observed that African women form an indispensable part of human resources for development, it stated that without their contributions, the economies of African countries cannot be expected even to be maintained at their present low level not to talk of developmental progress arising thereof, It is therefore advisable that any policy on development must include women, otherwise to pursue a development policy without women would be wasteful and defeating.

The Role Of Women In Traditional Society
In the past, men bore the economic responsibility of the family all alone, and other members of the family ran to them in time of need. The women's sole responsibility, on the other hand, was to bear and rear children. Confirming this Ohukwuma (1994) stated that women in the cultural context achieved status through marriage and became fulfilled through motherhood. Such a view bound women to men and accorded women an inferior status in the general scheme of things. Her routine includes waking up much earlier than her husband and the children, ensuring that the house is tidy and takes care of domestic chores, fetches and carries water and firewood, works on the farm yet does not own land; does not participate in village council or governance; is weepy and emotional. Women are not allowed even to inherit their father's or their mother's property. Supporting this point, a United Nations report (1985) said that "Women do 60% of all work but earn only 10% of the wages and own only i% of the world's property. However, the roles of women have changes tremendously in the modern society.

The Change Roles Of Women In The Modern Society
The modern roles of women in Nigeria can be described in terms of their social, political and economic activities. Development cannot be feasible without involving women, 'today in Nigeria, women have become a revolutionary force to be reckoned with, women have been added to labour force all over the continent. It will be quite expedient to discuss the changing roles of women under the following headings: the home, politics, agriculture, business scene etc.

Women's Role At Home
Women are responsible for early training of their children. Our traditional education provides adequate moral training for women who in turn pass it down through instructions to their children. They care in so many ways as keeping and sustaining human life, ensuring that the child conforms to the accepted social norms. They ensure also that the child achieves success and develops into a responsible
being. In fact, women are the doctors, teachers, cooks, accountants and lawyers of their various families. For the nation to develop, it has to start from the home and gradually go round the whole nation.

Women's Role In Politics

Women have made great contributions in politics. 'the immense contributions of women in political development of any nation need not to be overemphasized. Though women are more quarrelsome and cantankerous than men, they are equally less destructive and animalistic than men hence they can be very effective in wiping out what they consider evil and their commitment is usually total, Ndubuisi (1991). This view explains why some Nigerian women had left indelible marks in the Nigerian political history. Such women include Madam Tinubu, Fumilayo Ransome Kuli, Hfunsetaan Aniwurg, Margaret Likpo, Mora Nwapa, Queen Amina and Lady Idta. Today, we have about six women in the Senate, many of them in the House of Representatives and many that are local government chair persons.

Women's Role In Agriculture

Traditionally, roles in agriculture were sex-specific with the women complementing the men. Men did the clearing, ridge making and planting while the women mostly were responsible for weeding, harvesting, marketing and storage (Adeyokunnu, 1981). But now these women are no longer only "Farmers' wives" but are "farmers themselves" (WFTHH. 1986). infact, Nigerian women play significant roles as farmers, traders and entrepreneurs. McCaughey (1994) reports that up to 80% of women are engaged in agriculture and women produce more than 50% of all food produced in developing countries.

Women's Role In Business

Modern African women exhibit great ingenuity in business. On the business scene, many women have through managerial skills and intelligence made a remarkable break through in their contributions to the economy of the nation. For instance, the roles Kuforiji Olubi played in Nigeria worth something. She was the first Nigerian female chartered accountant. She has also played these notable roles: First woman chairman of the River Basin Development Authority; First woman chairman of the largest commercial bank in Nigeria; and First woman to be admitted as Fellow of Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM).

Problems Militating Against Women Effective Participation In Nation Building

The major constraints that hinder women's effective participation in nation building are tradition and culture, illiteracy science and technology, health care services etc.

Tradition And Culture

Traditional Nigerian society recognizes child rearing and house-keeping as the primary roles of women, recommends lighter task, for women, regards women as being feminine, thereby protects them, prevents and discourages them from careers and risk-involving activities that should compel them to exert physical strength, challenge their mental powers, their power of imagination and ingenuity. All these cultural and social practices among others were extreme cases of shielding women from education and Western Civilization, subjecting them as if they are in bondage and serves as a setback on the social development of Nigerian women, thereby effecting their contributions in the nation building.

Illiteracy

It is evident that Nigerian women are educationally disadvantaged and backward. Alele-Williams (1989). There is a dwindling number of females who go from primary up to tertiary levels of education as a result of pregnancy, early marriage, financial constraints and prejudices. To neglect the education of women and rural women in particular, is to neglect the full potential of human resources and to ignore national development bearing in mind that education is a powerful catalyst for development which members of the society should possess to be efficient and effective.

Science And Technology

In spite of the fact that the success of national development depend on the active participation of women, it has been variously noted that women are under represented in science and technology (Nsofor, 2001). The low participation of women in areas of science and technology had inhibited women contributions towards nation building. Today, we have computers in
almost every establishment, electrical appliances etc. to improve the quality of life thereby 
productions without adequate training in science and technology women would not have skills that 
will enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

Women in the rural areas still practice traditional agriculture with hoes, cutlasses, knives and 
human porterage. The same plot of the land is cultivated year in year out, hence, the poor harvest 
which creates famine. Mechanized agriculture and the use of fertilizer are provided for cash cropping 
all under the control of men. Extension education and services are only geared towards men. and 
aricultural agents are invariably men. Under this condition, women cannot be expected to contribute 
effectively to agricultural production.

Lands And Loan
The women in Nigeria had no power to administer wealth and land nor are they allowed to 
participate in serious decision making, neither in native homes nor the family they are married.

Loans are obtained from banks and related firms based on collateral submission as security 
e.g. landed properties such loans are not for women in Nigeria since they have no powers to 
administer wealth and land. This also limits the capacity of women in the buildings up of the nation 
since industrialization needs land and capital.

Health Care Services
Health is paramount in the survival and progress of any family or nation. The health standards of 
the family are determined by women, yet there is nothing to write home about in the rural areas in terms 
of sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, waste disposal and water. In other words, the term rural area in Nigeria 
depicts squalor and epidemics (Azikiwe, 1990). To perform their duties, the women must be healthy and 
strong.

Suggestions For Improving The Conditions Of Women
The following suggestions are given towards improving the contributions of women in nation 
building.
1. Mass Education
Various motivational strategies should be used to encourage women participation in education 
e.g. prizes to local governments, clans, tribes, families etc. with highest female enrolment and 
performance in schools. This will reduce if not eliminate completely, the inhibiting factors on women 
such as low income, inferior social stylus, supervision, ill-health, dogmatism, cases of early marriage 
and low level of aspirations. There is a very strong relationship between the level of education of 
women and the standard of life of her family and invariably the society;
2. The Women Associations and Ministry of Education should set aside special grants for mass 
growth and development of the nation;
3. Making it possible for the average child (girls in particular) to have early contacts with the 
concepts of the materials related to science and technology even before attaining primary school 
age;
4. Providing agricultural extension services to women who produce the food crops for consumption 
instead of "providing them for men who produce cash crops which it not beneficial to the 
generality of people;
5. Women should be helped to form co-operatives and groups to make obtaining of loans a little bit 
easier than when they go for loans as individuals;
6. Women should be made to realized the importance of a clean environment, family planning, 
immunization etc. through talks, seminars, rural community health programmes and the use of 
mass media. Government should build health care centres and college hospitals to bring medical care 
to reach the poor women in rural areas.

Conclusion
Women education is recognized as one of the critical path ways to nation building. The 
unique importance and potentials of our women as partners in progress in national development if 
properly harnessed will go a long way to enhance national development.

References
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