

Women, Youth, and Social Development

The Problem

Globally, there is an increasing awareness on the role of women in socio-economic development, especially in developing countries. It has been widely acknowledged that promoting women empowerment and gender equality is smart economics. However, despite past efforts of government to integrate the women issues into the development agenda; gender inequality remains persistent within most Nigerian spaces. Therefore the push for a different approach by the present democratic government to not only ensure women empowerment but a sustainable development for the country through gender equality policy initiatives that will balance power relations between men and women including transforming the institutions which continue to perpetrate gender injustice, poverty and underdevelopment.

Although, gender issues have been at the centre of most government policies, their implementation had proven to be difficult in Nigeria due to patriarchy and weak political will.

The Jonathan administration has, however, further demonstrated commitment to women empowerment, gender equity and equality by promoting an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes. This is evident in the Federal Executive Council's approval for a Gender Unit to be headed by at least an Assistant Director in all MDAs.

Reform Actions

The main thrust of the National Gender Policy Framework is anchored on gender equality principles, and a process in which women's roles in reproduction and production are not only valued, but are seen as the core of the nation's wealth upon which national development is hinged. The major tool required for social transformation is the system-wide approach for policy reforms, gender education and capacity building including legislative support for the promotion of women empowerment, gender equity and equality, mainstreaming and youths empowerment in both public and private sectors policies and programmes. The entrenchment of affirmative action for women in order to promote equal opportunity in all facets of national life was a key policy driver in this respect as outlined below:

1. Policy of Effective Representation of Women in Government:

This initiative aimed at achieving minimum threshold of representation for women through implementation of special measures, quotas and mechanisms for achieving minimum critical threshold of women in political offices, party organs and public life and by ensuring 35% affirmative action (as stipulated in the National Gender Policy) in favour of women to bridge gender gaps in political representation, in both elective and appointive posts at all levels. For example a directive of the CBN as at 2014 is that, 30% of Board of Directors of Nigerian Banks be represented by women in order to encourage women participation and to aspire for the highest positions in the corporate world.

2. Policy Establishing Gender Units in Federal Ministries Departments and Agencies:

To institutionalise the quest for gender balance and gender responsive programming in the Public Service, the Federal Executive Council in 2010 approved the establishment of Gender Units in all MDAs to be headed by a Directorate Cadre officer.

3. Gender Budgeting Policy:

In order to address some of the developmental gaps between men and women, the Federal Government in 2013 introduced key targets for girls and women through a project tagged "Growing

Girls and Women” in Nigeria. The objective of the project is to improve the lives of the poorest girls and women and focus government funds on delivering concrete results for girls and women in the work programmes of five major pilot Ministries: Agriculture and Rural Development, Communication Technology, Health, Works and Water Resources. A total sum of N3 billion was earmarked for gender related activities in 2013 and this will be scaled up to other line ministries over time.

4. Women Empowerment Policy:

Aware of the fact that the majority of the poor are women, the Jonathan administration has initiated a number of policies and initiatives to empower women. Mechanisms were put in place to boost women’s entrepreneurial activities and encourage skills acquisition, especially among rural women.

5. Training Programmes Policy:

A policy to construct vocational skill acquisition centres for women across the country was put in place. This is to enable women with various self-employable skills such as interior and outdoor decorations, cosmetology and beauty therapy, hairdressing, fashion designing, and garment making to be gainfully employed. Each skill acquisition centre is expected to train 500 women and persons with disabilities per year to help reduce unemployment and poverty.

6. Micro-Credit for Women Policy:

This initiative aims at augmenting the training programme by providing access to micro-credit to women, who are typically discriminated against in the formal money market. There are at least two schemes: first is the Women Fund for Economic Empowerment (WOFEE) which is a revolving facility for collaboration between Federal Government, the Bank of Agriculture, and the State Governments. This scheme focuses on rural women. The second is the Business Development Fund for Women (BUDFOW), which is in collaboration with the Bank of Industry. It renders both financial and technical support to Nigerian women entrepreneurs.

7. Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN) Policy:

The YouWiN initiative was launched in October 2011 to provide jobs for 80,000 to 110,000 unemployed Nigerian youth. The YouWiN programme is a collaboration of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Communications Technology (MCT), and the Ministry of Youth Development. In addition, there is a component of the YouWiN that is dedicated to women, i.e. YouWiN for Women.

8. Public Works and Women/Youth Employment (PW/WYE) Policy:

The President launched this initiative in January 2012. The project targeted 370,000 jobs across the country in the year.

9. Community Service, Women, and Youth Employment Programme (CSWEYE): This scheme is funded by SURE-P under the Social Safety net programme and aims to provide employment in labour-intensive development services to about 185,000 youth, with a minimum of 30% of the spaces reserved for women. It is designed to target large numbers of unemployed youth from each state of the Federation.

10. Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS):

The Graduate Internship Scheme is a component of the CSWYE, designed to enhance the employability of about 100,000 unemployed graduates in the 36 states of the Federation and the FCT through internship programmes in interested public and private companies, firms, and institutions.

11. People with disabilities

Successive governments had not really tackled the issues of Persons with disability or paid it much attention. 22 million Nigerians living with disabilities experience untold hardship ranging from unemployment, poverty, discrimination and segregation coupled with infringements on their fundamental human rights and lack of accessibility to services and infrastructures.

However the present administration has embraced global best practices by ensuring the inclusion of persons with disability in its development agenda. This has impacted positively on the lives of PWDs. These policies are designed to rehabilitate PWDs to make them economically and socially productive. The policies also enunciate provision of disability-friendly structures in public institutions.

There had been less attention to the concerns of the older persons, ex-juveniles, destitute and distressed families over the years. The older persons are regarded as having outlived their usefulness, the ex-juveniles are stigmatized, a lot of families are distressed due to the unfavourable economic situation in the country while destitute are on the increase due to inability to afford the basic necessity of life.

12. National Child Policy

The challenges for meeting the Country's commitment to Promotion and Protection, Survival, Development and Participation of Rights as enunciated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Millennium Development Goals continues to attract attention despite notable Government efforts.

The impact of the attended challenges in the Health, Education and Social Welfare sectors has occasioned situations of neglect of basic rights leading to increased vulnerability of millions of Nigerian Children. These challenges facing the Nigerian Child include: Child Sexual Abuse and Violence, impact of HIV/AIDS, Poverty, Child Marriage, Discrimination and Child Trafficking.

To facilitate the realization of the rights recognized in the Convention and the Nigerian Child's Rights Act 2003, and in consideration of the fact that responsibility for providing the required facilities and services lie with various duty bearers at various levels of government, the **National Child Policy** was produced in 2006 to guide the implementation of the Child Rights Act, 2003. The policy also provide a basis for collaboration and partnership between organizations and individuals working for the achievements of Child's Rights in Nigeria.

13. Social Welfare Nigeria:

This is an all-inclusive social welfare policy that will ensure the welfare and development of Nigeria's most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as the poor, families in distress, older persons, discharged offenders, the destitute, and the needy.

The Social Development, Decree No. 12 of 1974 and a National Policy on Social Development delineating the main components of Social Development as Social Welfare, Community Development, Youth and Child Development, Women in Development and Sports Development created the Social Development Sector. However, since its establishment Social Development components and its sub-functions have been domiciled in other government MDAs arising from frequent administrative restructuring.

Main Achievements

One major achievement of these initiatives by the Jonathan administration is the successful integration of women in all aspects of national development. Women have never, in the history of Nigeria, been so visible and involved in governance and decision-making than is the case under this administration. One significant impact of this is the surge in confidence amongst women that they can actually aspire to any position in the national polity. Consistent with the administration's policy on girl-child education, young school girls now have many role models to aspire to.

Another achievement of this administration is the introduction and institutionalisation of social security and social safety nets. Under the various SURE-P programmes, for example, the most vulnerable members of the society are receiving various forms of support. The programmes are designed to serve multiple purposes. For instance, the conditional cash transfer serves as a social

safety net as well as encouraging women to attend antenatal and immunisation programmes. Also, the CSWEYE provides a safety net and serves as a job creating and empowerment initiative.

Other sector specific outcomes of the reforms of women and youth development under the Jonathan administration are as follows:

1. **Women's representation:** A significant achievement of the Jonathan administration was the increase in women's representation in governance and the attainment of 33% affirmative action in federal appointments at the executive level, with the appointment of 13 female ministers out of 42, representing 31% and five special advisers out of 18, representing 23%. Other appointments are 10 ambassadors, 11 permanent secretaries, 16 female judges of the federal High Court, 16 female judges of the Court of Appeal, three female judges of the Supreme Court, six female judges of the National Industrial Court, as well as the President of the Court of Appeal and Chief Justice of the Federation were appointed by President Jonathan. Under his administration, women representation has reached 33%, which is above the 30% target. These appointments, which were made directly by President Jonathan, set the stage for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target number three on gender equality and women empowerment. In line with the objective of mainstreaming government's effort to improve the lives of women, the Ministry of Works signed MoUs with three private contractor firms that have pledged to support women subcontractors in their road contracts.
2. **Empowerment:** Another achievement is the construction and equipping of 77 skills acquisition centres across the country, of which 24 have been completed.
3. **Social Safety Net Programme:** Under the conditional cash transfer (CCT) scheme launched in May 2013, 172 female beneficiaries have received cash transfers totaling N206,900 from the first pilot primary health centre. To expand its coverage, most states will join in this initiative. By the end of 2013, the CCT has reached more than 10,000 women and children in eight states, namely Anambra, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Kaduna, Niger, Ogun, and Zamfara.
4. **Creation of new Department of Social Security:** A new Department of Social Security was created in the Ministry of Labour and Productivity to promote coordinated and universal approach to social security in the nation and to extend social protection to vulnerable Nigerians. In this regard, the **New Employee's Compensation Act** was enacted in 2010. It gives additional social protection to all workers who may sustain injury at the workplace. As a result of the new Act, the Nigeria Social Trust Fund (NSITF) was resuscitated and currently functioning. As at the end of May 2013, 9,409,259 people were benefiting from various social security schemes, well over the target of 8,000,000 for 2013.
5. In addition to the highlighted initiatives, the Federal Government, through the Ministry has also recorded notable **gender responsive action** through:
 - (a) Production of National Policy on Women (2000);
 - (b) Production of National Gender Policy (2006);
 - (c) Establishment of National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other related Matters (2003) (NAPTIP);
 - (d) Production of the Nigeria Gender Statistics Book, 2006;
 - (e) Secured approval for the establishment of Women Political empowerment Offices (2006);
 - (f) Establishment of sector specific gender policies for the Nigeria Police, the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), NACA and NAFDAC;
 - (g) Establishment of Nigerian women Trust Fund;
 - (h) Review of the National Gender Policy;
 - (i) Creation of Department of Economic Services and incorporation of a gender perspective in the vision 20:2020 document;

- (j) Production of the Nigeria Gender Statistics Book 2008;
- (k) Production of the Nigeria Gender Statistics Book 2013;

6. Promotion and Protection of Children’s Rights in Nigeria:

Enactment and Implementation of Child’s Rights Act 2003:

The Government of Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development has made landmark achievements towards effective implementation of the various International and Regional *instruments* on Children’s Rights. To this end, the Federal Government has domesticated the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the AU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child through the passage of the Child’s Rights Act, 2003. The Act provides for the rights and responsibilities of the child in Nigeria Child Justice Administration and Care & Supervision of the Child among other things. However, in keeping with the structure of sub-national Government autonomy in Nigeria, the Act is only operational in the Federal Capital Territory, every State of the Federation is expected to pass similar Laws for its provisions to be binding within the States. As a result of massive awareness and high level advocacy by the Ministry, twenty-two out of thirty-six States of the Federation have domesticated the Act. Advocacy and Awareness efforts are on-going to ensure full passage and effective implementation by all States of Nigeria.

Protection of Children Against Sexual Abuse and other forms of Violence:

In response to the rampant cases of child sexual abuses and other forms of violence against children in Nigeria, the Ministry is collaborating with key Stakeholders including the Nigerian Police Force, Ministry of Justice, National Human Rights Commission, State Government amongst others to ensure vigorous investigation of cases of child abuse with a view to bringing the perpetrators to book. Similarly, the State Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Development are collaborating with key stakeholders including Civil Society and Child Protection Network officials to effectively address the menace of child sexual abuse.

In 2014, the Honourable Minister Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development inaugurated the **National** Joint Task Force for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and other Forms of Violence Against Children in Nigeria. The Task Force was established to put in place preventive measures, monitor and respond to child sexual abuse and violence against children. It provides a unified platform for both government agencies and the civil society to jointly prevent and respond to child sexual abuse and violence against children in a coordinated manner. It ensures that child victims of sexual assaults are supported and intervention/succour provided in real time. In this regard, the Ministry is collaborating with African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), Ministries of Justice, Education, Health as well as Nigeria Police Force and other Child Protection Networks.

In order to generate accurate and research-based data that would ensure informed and evidence-based programming for effective child protection in Nigeria, the Ministry in collaboration with United States Centre for Disease Control (CDC) Atlanta, United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and National Population Commission (NPOPC) have just concluded a Survey on Violence against Children in Nigeria and the final research data is expected to be ready by October, 2014.

Establishment and Institutionalization of National Children’s Parliament:

The National Children’s Parliament was inaugurated in year 2000 to provide a veritable platform for children to expressing their **views**/opinions on issues concerning them as well as other topical issues in order to achieve sustainable and all-inclusive development. Subsequently, the Parliament was institutionalized in all the States and Local Government Areas of the Country in year 2005.

Orphans and Vulnerable Children:

The Ministry in collaboration with Key Stakeholders including Development Partners are providing Social Services to Orphans and Vulnerable Children in seven key areas namely: Education,

Psychosocial support, Health, Household Economic Strengthening, Protection, Shelter and Care, Nutrition and Food Security.

The first OVC National Plan of Action was used to provide Services to OVC from 2006-2010. In a bid to entrench Multi-sectorial approach to OVC Programming in Nigeria, a National Priority Agenda for Vulnerable **Children** in Nigeria 2013-2020. NPA is an eight year Strategic Framework to guide the Multi-sectorial operationalization of the Nigeria's vision 20:2020 (NV 20:2020) which aims to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable children in Nigeria and reduce child poverty. The NPA directly relates to Plan 1 of NV 20:2020.

1. Also, a National Service Standards for improving the quality of life of vulnerable children in Nigeria. The document **provides** a uniform and evidence-based approach for service providers in Nigeria to ensure that all children achieve their full developmental potentials through the provision of quality and support services.
2. With respect to **Persons With Disabilities (PWDs)** the country recorded the following milestone achievements:
 - (i) Sponsorship of successful election of two (2) Nigerians as a member of UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Vice President (African Region) of Rehabilitation International (RI);
 - (ii) Successful conduct of the election of a new executive of the vulnerable body of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the Country;
 - (iii) Economic empowerment of PWDS in 5 five States and FCT;
 - (iv) Completion of Braille libraries and press centres at Awka, Bauchi, Calabar and Maiduguri in 2006 to produce Braille materials for the benefits of Persons with visual impairments in the Country;
 - (v) Almost completed the National Rehabilitation Institute and Resource Centre in Abuja. When completed, the centre will be training 500 (PWDs) yearly in various marketable skills such as repair of GSM phones, welding, soap making etc.;
3. In carrying out **Social Development Work**, the Ministry recorded the following achievements:
 - ✓ Care and Support for Older Persons
 - Provision of financial support to older persons in the community and Institutions. In line with the key performance indicators, the Ministry empowers 100 Older Persons Yearly.
 - Provides guidelines for the establishment of Day Centres for the elderly which is designed to cater for their recreational needs.
 - Embarks on continuous advocacy programmes to sensitize the populace on the needs and aspiration of Older Persons.
 - Provides financial and material support for Institutionalized Older persons in the 40 Old Peoples Homes in Nigeria.
 - The International Day of Older Person is observed every year to further sensitize the public on the plight of older persons from 1999 to date.
 - ✓ Survey of Juvenile Correctional Institutions in Nigeria and Services for Juvenile ex-offenders
 - A survey of correctional Institutions was conducted to enable an informed programme of intervention in these Institutions that will translate into effective serve delivery.
 - In collaboration with Nigeria Prisons, the Ministry in 2009 organized empowerment programme for offenders about to be discharged. The programme involved provision of vocational tools, take-off grants and follow – up activities
 - ✓ Upgrading of structures in Social Development Training Institutions in Nigeria

In line with enhancing the knowledge base of social workers in the country, the Ministry has:

- Upgraded facilities and critical infrastructures at the Federal School of Social work Emene.
- Facilitated other states of the Federation to replicate same in their States.
- Embarked on continuous training of the serving social workers to update their knowledge for effective service delivery.
- Reviewed regularly the Social Development Curriculum to reflect current realities.
- ✓ International and National Social Case Work
 - The Ministry carries out on a regular basis International and National Social Case Investigation which involves settling of family disputes, social contact, family re-union.
 - Provides financial support for families in distress to set up small scale business, settle medical bills and attend to sundry family issues.
- the department has handled over 1,500 national and international cases from 1999 to date.

Key Challenges

In spite of efforts to effectively implement the gender transformation policy, gender equality remains as elusive and complex concept as it has ever been. The National Gender Policy has been in operation for the past 8 years now (2006), yet the desired goal has not been fully realised due to some or all of the following:

1. The Gender Policy requires greater synergy among stakeholders including overarching institutional restructuring and professionalism.
2. The efficacy of the Gender Policy strategies is hinged on a functional gender management system, while the weak nature of overall Political will across Government strata, upholding Gender as core value for transforming the Nigerian society, dealing with patriarchy headlong and poor technical expertise/capacity to fully support the system for gender management in all MDAs including the Private Sector has been the bane of achieving full implementation of the Gender Policy Strategies.
3. Poor budgetary allocation to the Social Development Ministry with less than 1% of national budget has hampered programme support, effective coordination, supervision and monitoring of gender related activities at all levels.
4. Balkanization of the components of the Social Development sector, which are located in different Agencies leading to lack of synergy, coordination and effectiveness of the Sector.

Assessment of Reform Initiative

Assessed against the 10 criteria listed above, women and youth policy reforms have been fairly successful.

S/No	Assessment Criteria	Result of Assessment
1	Have the reforms improved the quality and quantity of the public service delivered?	The quality and quantity of gender re-balancing has significantly improved as women representation at all levels has significantly improved.

S/No	Assessment Criteria	Result of Assessment
2	Do more people now have access to services, including disadvantaged groups such as women, Children, and people with disabilities?	In terms of access, more women now have access to positions in both public and private sector than before. Child protection and survival programmes, given the current high level of collaboration and synergy among stakeholders, are yielding positive results.
3	Have the reforms reduced the cost of governance?	Not Applicable
4	Have the reforms made the service more affordable for citizens?	Not Applicable
5	Have the reforms reduced corruption?	Not Applicable
6	Have the reforms reduced unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape?	Yes, to some extent.
7	Are the reform initiatives likely to lead to improved development outcomes?	Yes. The initiatives are likely to lead to improved development outcomes.
8	Are things improving, staying the same, or getting worse?	Things are generally improving in the women, child and social sectors.
9	Where things are improving, will those improvements endure?	Some of the reforms, such as the affirmative action legislation action on child rights, are sustainable.
10	Where things are not improving, what should be done?	Not Applicable

Proposed Next Steps

1. The Federal Executive Council approved Affirmative Action should be backed by legislation.
2. Continued Awareness and High level Advocacy Programmes by the Ministry to ensure full passage and effective implementation and enforcement of Child's Rights Act, 2003.
3. Development and implementation of Action Plan of the 2014 National Survey on Violence Against Children and effective execution of activities of the National Joint Taskforce for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and other forms of Violence Against Children in Nigeria.
4. Implementation of National Priority Agenda for Children (2013-2020) and National Service Standards for improving the quality of life of vulnerable children in Nigeria.

5. More aggressive and innovative youth employment strategies and schemes should be devised to tackle the problem of unemployment and check their vulnerability to acts of violence.
6. Political parties that use the youth for dubious political purposes should be sanctioned by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to serve as deterrence to others.