

Evaluation of Gender Policy in Agriculture of Nigerian Government in Some Selected States in the North East

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Abstract: The study evaluated gender policy in agriculture of Nigerian government in the North East region of the country. Three research questions guided the study. The design for the study was descriptive research design. The population of the study comprise of rural women farmers in the North East and the sample was 384 rural women farmers randomly selected in the region. Structured questionnaire was used to obtain data for the study. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by four experts, two from the Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Adamawa State University Mubi and two from the Department of Vocational Education, ModibboAdama University Yola. The reliability test of the instrument was carried out by conducting a field trial test on thirty male farmers that are not part of the population of the study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to obtain a reliability of 0.82. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Results from the study revealed that the policy has not promoted gender equality in agriculture in Nigeria and the objectives of the policy have not been achieved. It was recommended that government should conduct regular training on gender parity to staff of ministry/departments of agriculture at both federal, state and local government levels to improve their capacity to implement gender policy in agriculture of the country.

Key Words: Evaluation, gender policy, agriculture, north east.

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I. Introduction

Agriculture occupies a key position in Nigeria's economy as a major source of livelihood for Nigerians most especially women. Agricultural sector has been one of the most important sectors of the Nigerian economy as it contributes about 35% towards the gross domestic product [1]. Effective, sustainable and equitable agriculture and rural development cannot be achieved without an explicit recognition of the roles of women in agricultural production.

Women play a very significant role in agricultural production, processing and utilization in Nigeria but they are constrained under the unified extension system by socio-cultural barriers. Women account for 70% of agricultural workers, 80% of food producers, 100% of those who process basic food stuff and 60% to 90% of those who undertake agricultural marketing [2]. Furthermore, [3] opined that Nigerian women are responsible for significant proportion of the work load in food production, animal husbandry, food processing and marketing in addition to child-bearing responsibility and management roles.

According to [4], evaluation is generally a process that attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness and impact of activities in the light of their objectives. The basic rationale for evaluation is that, it provides information for action while its primary justification is that, it contributes to the rationalization of decision making. Agricultural policies and programmes may be evaluated in terms of appropriateness which include suitability and quality, level of achievement of the primary objectives and efficiency of the policy or programme, the entire policy / programme or a section of it could be evaluated on the basis of these parameter. A policy or programme designed to improve the productivity of the farmers according to [5] should be measured according to the indicators stated in the policy to avoid deviation.

Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities that are concerned with being male or female, and also the relationship between women and men, girls and boys as well as the relationship between women and those relationships between men [6]. According to [7], Gender refers to social roles allocated to men and women within a particular society at a particular time. Such roles and differences that exist between them are conditioned by a variety of economic, political, ideological and cultural factors characterized in most societies

by unequal power relationship. Gender refers to the social differences that exist in a society between women and men, boys and girls.

Gender equality according to [8] is the situation which allows women and men to have equal treatment, conditions and opportunities for realizing their full potentials, human rights and dignity, and contribution to socio-cultural, economic and political development. Gender equality is accomplished when women and men enjoy the same opportunities and rights across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision making and when the different aspirations, behaviours and needs of women and men are equally treated, valued and favoured[6]. Gender equality is all about engagement of both women and men in rational decision-making process on their livelihood strategies and life choices [9].

Gender inequality according to [10], is allowing people different opportunities due to perceived differences based solely on issues of gender. It acknowledges that men and women are not equal. Gender inequalities in access to and control over resources are persistent, bringing a setback in sustainable and inclusive development of agricultural sector. Gender inequalities limit agricultural productivity and efficiency and in so doing, undermine development agendas [11]. According to [12], gender disparity exists when it comes to women empowerment in Nigeria and this tends to affect food production in the country. Food security is a basic human right enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights. Women have the right to be equal partners with men in the agricultural sector.

The federal government of Nigeria launched the National Gender Policy in Agriculture with the aim of reducing drastically the vulnerability of women to biases in farming, closing gender gap and also address the gender inequality in the agricultural sector. It was introduced to also provide policy direction for the different roles of women and men in agriculture for development and gender equality in access to resources. The current state of gender equality in the agricultural sector shows that males absolutely dominate the sector in terms of access to land, inputs, outputs benefits earnings and support services. This is in spite of the fact that women numerically outnumber the men who work in the agricultural sector [11].

The gender policy framework has under laying vision, mission, goal and policy objectives as stated by [11]:

Vision: An agricultural sector that is driven by practices and operation that are based on gender equity and equal opportunities to all men and women in the agricultural value chain.

Mission: To promote gender equity and women's empowerment in research, capacity development and institutional strengthening in the agricultural sector towards ensuring house hold, community and national growth.

Goal: The goal of agricultural gender policy is to ensure equal opportunities and access to resources, services and programmes in agriculture in Nigeria irrespective of gender to ensure food security and economic growth in Nigeria.

The objective of the policy are as follows:

1. To develop gender competencies of staff and partners in addressing gender gaps and gender aware programming.
2. To institutionalize gender responsive programming (Planning and budgeting), implementation, monitoring and reporting systems.
3. To promote the use of gender sensitive data collection and gender statistics for evidence – based planning, policy and programme design, implementation and evaluation.
4. To widen and manage partnership and shared mechanisms amongst government institutions, development partners, and private sector and incorporate appropriate actions to respond to practical and strategic gender needs in the agricultural sector.
5. To improve the gender responsiveness in delivery of agricultural services.

The main purpose of gender policy for the sector is to promote and ensure the adoption of gender sensitive and gender responsive approaches to the agriculture sector planning and programming, such that men and women have equal access to and control of productive resources and opportunities to achieve their potentials and sustain suitable livelihoods. Gender policy is expected to transform the agricultural sector so as to improve food security, reduce hunger, poverty and sustain the livelihoods of men and women who rely on agricultural value chain [11].

Gender policy in agriculture as stated above is expected to drastically reduce the vulnerability of women to biases in agriculture, address the unequal gender power relation and bridge gender-gap and also improve the contribution of small holder farmers who are predominantly women in Northern Nigeria. It is not certain whether that has been achieved or at what level is the achievement furthermore, ever since this policy was introduced, no research work has been done to evaluate the policy in terms of achieved the objectives outlined by the policy hence the need for this evaluation.

II. Statement Of The Problem

Conducive atmosphere exists in Nigeria for the Gender Policy in Agriculture due to the existence of core policy in Agriculture due to the existence of core policy and legal instrument that guide the agricultural sector and gender related issues; the Green Alternative 2016 – 2020, ECOWAS Gender Policy and 1999 constitution of Nigeria (as amended) are examples of such policies. It is not quite certain whether gender policy in agriculture of Nigeria Government has adequately promoted the desired gender equality in agricultural production. The level of awareness of gender policy in agriculture unaware of the policy.

Furthermore, the objectives of the policy were spelt out when the policy was launched by the Federal Government of Nigeria, evaluation has not been carried out to ascertain whether the objectives of the policy are being achieved. It is therefore necessary to carry out an evaluation of the gender policy in agriculture to determine whether it has adequately promoted equality in agriculture in terms of objectives achievement.

III. Purpose Of The Study

The main purpose of the study is to evaluate the gender policy in Agriculture of Nigeria Government in Northern Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study will be to.

1. Determine whether gender policy in agriculture of Nigerian government has promoted gender equality in agricultural production in some selected states in the North East.
2. Determine whether the objectives of the gender policy in agriculture of Nigerian government have been achieved in some selected states in the North East.
3. Determine whether gender policy in agriculture of Nigerian government has improved the standard of living off rural women farmers in some selected states in the North East.

IV. Research Questions

The following questions will be answered by the study

1. To what extent has gender policy in agriculture of Nigerian government promoted gender equality in agricultural production in some selected states in the North East?
2. To what extent have the objectives of gender policy in agriculture of Nigeria government been achieved in some selected states in the North East?
3. To what extent has gender policy in agriculture of Nigerian government improved the standard of living of rural women farmers in some selected states in the North East?

V. Materials And Methods

The design for the study was a descriptive research design. The study was conducted in the North East, Nigerian. North East is one of the geopolitical zones in Nigeria, consisting of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe states. It occupies slightly less than one-third of Nigeria's total area and has a projected population for 2011 of 23, 558, 674 or 13.5% of the country's [13]. Additionally, the zone shares international borders with three countries: Republic of Cameroon to the East, Republic of Chad to the North East and Niger Republic to the North. The zone has been a major contributor to national net food production but with the highest rate of poverty in Nigeria according to National Bureau of Statistics 2010. The population of the study comprise of women farmers in the selected states in the North East geopolitical zone. The sample of the study consist of 384 rural women farmers randomly selected using Cochran's formula for infinite population. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The instrument was divided into four sections. Section A was based on research question one while sections B, C and D were based on research questions two three and four respectively. Section B, C and D of the instrument were structured on a four points scale. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by four experts, two from the Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Adamawa State University Mubi and two from the Department of Vocational Education, ModibboAdama University of Technology, Yola. The reliability test of the instrument was carried out by conducting a field trial test of the questionnaire with thirty respondents which was made up of male farmers in Adamawa State. Pearson's product moment correction co-efficient was used and a reliability co-efficient of 0.82 was obtained. The researchers administered and collected back the questionnaires. The data collected was analyzed using frequency and percentage for research question one and then descriptive data analysis: mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions two, three and four. A mean of 2.50 and above was considered as achieved (moderate extent/ moderately achieved) and opinion with a mean of less than 2.50 was considered as not achieved (not at all).

VI. Results

Research Question 1

To what extent has gender policy in agriculture of Nigerian government promoted gender equality in agricultural production in some selected states in the North East?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Rural Women Farmers in Some Selected States in the North East on the Extent to which Gender Policy in Agriculture of Nigerian Government Has Promoted Gender Equality in Agricultural Production

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Women ownership of almost equal farm size with men	2.54	1.11	A
2.	Improved provision of financial services to women to help them in farming	1.87	0.84	NA
3.	Improved access to agricultural resources by women through gender policy	1.91	0.96	NA
4.	Encouragement of women in agriculture by gender policy in agriculture		0.97	NA
5.	Reduction of gender-based discrimination by the policy	1.88	1.00	NA
6.	Sharing of agricultural best practices by both men and women	1.90	1.01	NA
7.	Strengthening of land tenure right to allow women take ownership of farm land	1.78	0.88	NA
Grand Mean		1.91	0.97	NA

A= Achieved NA= Not Achieved

Table 1 Presented result on the extent to which gender policy in agriculture of Nigerian government promoted gender equality in agricultural production in the North East. The result showed that only item 1 with mean of 2.54 was accepted by the respondents and all other items were rejected meaning the policy has not promoted gender equality in agriculture in the region with a grand mean of 1.91.

Research Question 2

To what extent have the objectives of gender policy in agriculture of Nigeria government been achieved in some selected states in the North East?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Rural Women Farmers in Some Selected States in the North East on the Achievement of Objectives of Gender Policy in Agriculture of Nigerian Government

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Equal agricultural opportunities to both men and women	1.90	0.98	NA
2.	Equal access to farm implements by both men and women	1.69	0.89	NA
3.	Equal access to seeds by both men and women	1.58	0.75	NA
4.	Equal access to fertilizer by both men and women	1.59	0.81	NA
5.	Equal access to agricultural loans by both men and women	1.60	0.87	NA
6.	Equal access to agricultural insurance by both men and women	1.56	0.78	NA
7.	Equal access to agricultural commodity markets by both men and women	3.17	0.85	A
8.	Gender sensitive data collection method	1.85	0.97	NA
9.	Response to practical and strategic gender needs in agriculture	1.71	0.94	NA
10.	Development of gender competencies in addressing gender gap	1.67	0.83	NA
11.	Proper implementation of gender policy in agriculture	1.61	0.84	NA
12.	Proper monitoring to ensure implementation of the policy	1.62	0.83	NA
Grand Mean		1.79	0.86	NA

Table 2 Presented result on the extent of achievement of the objectives of gender policy in agriculture in some selected states in the North East. From the table, equal access to agricultural commodity markets by both men and women was the only part of the objectives that has been achieved with a mean rating of 3.17. All other parts of the objectives such as access to agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizer, farm tools and implements have not been achieved by the policy in some selected states in the North East. In all, the grand mean obtained was 1.79.

Research Question 3

To what extent has gender policy in agriculture of Nigeria government improved the standard of living of rural women farmers in some selected states in the North East?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Rural Women Farmers in Some Selected States in the North East on the Improvement of Standard of Living of Rural Women Farmers by Gender Policy in Agriculture of Nigerian Government

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Gender policy in agriculture led to economic empowerment of rural women in agriculture in the north east	1.80	0.85	NA
2.	The policy has led to reduction in poverty among rural women in agriculture in the north east	1.84	0.88	NA
3.	The policy has created link between financial institutions and rural women in agriculture in the north east	1.87	0.90	NA
4.	The policy has led to improvement in the yield of rural women in agriculture in the north east	1.77	0.86	NA
5.	The policy has led to increase in the income of rural women in agriculture in the north east	1.80	0.88	NA
6.	The policy has led to increase in the savings of rural women in agriculture in the north east	1.80	0.84	NA
Grand Mean		1.81	0.86	NA

Table 3 Presented result on the extent to which gender policy in agriculture of Nigerian government has improved the living standard of rural women farmers in some selected states in the North East. From the table above, respondents were of the opinion that the gender policy in agriculture has not improve their standard of living as no mean rating was up to the accepted level of 2.0 but rather with a grand mean of 1.81.

VII. Discussions

The findings of this study on promotion of gender equality in agricultural production by gender policy in agriculture in the North East region of Nigeria revealed that the policy has not promoted gender equality in agricultural production in the region despite government intervention. This finding is in agreement with the findings of [12] who found out from his study that gender disparity exist when it comes to women empowerment in Nigeria and despite all effort by government to create gender equality, nothing has been achieved so far.

The findings of the study further revealed that the objectives of gender policy in agriculture of Nigerian government has not been achieved in the North East geopolitical zone of the country. Equal access to agricultural commodity markets by both men and women is the only objective of the policy that has been achieved out of the many objectives that were outlined by the policy. This finding is contrary to the findings of [4] who found out in his study that objectives of farming skills acquisition programme of Adamawa State government were fully achieved.

The findings of the study further revealed that gender policy in agriculture of Nigerian government has not improved the standard of living of rural women farmers in the North East region of the country as most of the women are not even aware of the existence of the policy in Nigeria. This finding is also contrary to the findings of [4] which in his study found out that farming skills acquisition programme has improved the living standard of participants in the rural settlement of Adamawa State.

VIII. Conclusion

In Nigeria, the role of rural women in farming cannot be rivaled. Women play an integral role to ensure food security in the country and gender policy in agriculture was introduced due to the obvious fact that male dominates the sector in terms of access to land, inputs, and support services. This occurs in spite of the fact that women outnumber men functioning in the agricultural sector of the country. The national policy on gender in agriculture is laudable but the question of its effective implementation is in doubt. However, adequate implementation of the policy will break the gender barrier that exist in agricultural production in the country.

IX. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Nigerian government should ensure proper implementation of the policy through proper monitoring and evaluation.
2. The government should create awareness to the women that are farmers in the North East on the policy and how they can derive benefit from it.

3. Government should conduct regular training on gender parity to staff of ministry/departments of agriculture at both federal, state and local government levels to improve their capacity to implement gender policy in agriculture of the country.
4. Rural women that are farming should create cooperative groups which will help them to press further on government for benefits through various policies and programmes.

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