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Acceptable Minimum Threshold of Universal Access to Social Services for Women in Nigeria: A Review of Selected Issues in the National Gender Policy

By Oko Chima Enworo¹, Vivian Chizoma Njemanze²

Abstract

Efforts at guaranteeing gender equality and women's empowerment in Nigeria reached its crescendo with the approval of the National Gender Policy (NGP) in 2006 by the Federal Executive Council, which came into effect in 2007. Objective 5 target (a) of the policy seeks to provide equal opportunities for women [and men] to enjoy and attain an acceptable minimum threshold of universal access to potable water and sanitation, electricity, transportation, and general security of life and property by the year 2015. At present, very few reviews have been done on that policy target. As a result, this paper adopts a literature review approach to review the performance of the NGP with regard to the target in question. Our findings show that the NGP does not offer quantifiable benchmarks for effective evaluation of the target of study, and just as in the pre-NGP era, in the post-NGP era in Nigeria, access to the concerned social services has been inequitable in favour of men, largely as a result of leadership failure in terms of lack of political will to implement the provisions of the NGP, corruption, and administrative lapses as well other social and cultural issues linked to patriarchy, knowledge, research and data limitations. Suggestions for improvement, for example, the non-politicization of women empowerment programmes, special women-alone initiatives, among others, are equally made.

Keywords: Access, Gender Policy, Review, Social Services, Women, Nigeria.

Introduction

The history of development policies in Nigeria has been that of neglect of the gender variable (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development [FMWASD], 2007). Prior to the 2006 National Gender Policy (NGP) which came into effect in 2007, the context was such that for several years in Nigeria, as a result of gender-based norms that ascribed household tasks to women and young girls mostly, they spent so much time and effort in search of safe water and convenient toilet facility, leading to tremendous economic waste in terms of time and effort that should have been put into productive activity (National Planning Commission [NPC], 2004; FMWASD, 2007). Moreover, in the midst of the country's poor transport infrastructure, women bore the burden of conveying water, fuelwood³, and other agricultural and petty trade goods (see also, McFerson, 2010). What is more, women were also the worst hit by the inadequate and unreliable power sector, since they relied on power for domestic use, small scale food processing and other businesses in the informal sector. Again, women had the highest casualties during conflicts and crisis in the country as victims of violence, hunger, disease, and rape (FMWASD, 2007). Furthermore, in the last decade preceding the NGP, thousands of women and young girls were trafficked into the sex slave industry, especially into Europe so that many people in Nigeria came to equate trafficking with prostitution alone and not with other forms of labor internally and externally (Olagbegi et al,

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³ This is used interchangeably with firewood, as identified in some of the literature.

2006). As a matter of fact, the problem of high gender differentiation in terms of work burden and excessive time imposed on women in Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond has been an age-long problem in the sub-region owing to under-provision of services flowing from infrastructure such as roads, water and sanitation, and energy sources (See for example, Kes& Swaminathan, 2006; Charmes, 2006; Vargha et al, 2017).

From a historical perspective, the first twenty years of development planning in Nigeria was largely welfarist, such that gender concerns and women's interests were subsumed within the national interest in a trickle-down approach to development practice; gender was not an issue of development planning (FMWASD, 2007). Subsequent efforts at women's welfare in Nigeria include, among others, a programme like the Better Life Programme for Rural Women, and the creation of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Welfare in 1995 with structures at national and state levels (Kezie-Nwoha, 2007). Nigerian women also participated in the Beijing Conference of 1995. Furthermore, the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by Nigeria in 1985. Article 14 Item 2 (h) of CEDAW made provision for women and men to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity, water supply, transport, and communications (United Nations, 2003). However, although the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Nigeria's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper launched by the Federal Government in 2004 made provisions for gender equality, it was fundamentally flawed in addressing gender equality and women's empowerment dynamics as gender issues were subsumed within wider development concerns (NPC, 2004; FMWASD, 2007). What is more, Nigeria is signatory to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); both have special provisions for gender equality and equity.

To crown its efforts towards ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment, the Nigerian government made the National Gender Policy (NGP) of 2006 come into effect in 2007 (National Population Commission (NPopC) and ICF Macro, 2009; Japan International Cooperation Agency [JICA], 2011a).

The overall goal of the NGP according to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2007, p. 17) is:

To build a just society devoid of discrimination, harness the full potentials of all social groups, regardless of sex or circumstances, promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political wellbeing of all citizens in order to achieve equitable rapid economic growth; evolve an evidence-based planning and governance system where human, social, financial and technological resources are efficiently and effectively deployed for sustainable development.

Of particular interest in the NGP is the mandate to provide equal opportunities for women [and men] to enjoy and attain an acceptable minimum threshold of universal access to social services⁴ like water and sanitation, transportation, electricity⁵, and general security of life and

⁴While education and health are parts of social services, in the current paper, only those services captured in *targets (a)*, under the fifth objective of the NGP *Priority Policy Targets* are captured, namely; potable water, sanitation, electricity, transportation, road networks, and general security of life and property (FMWASD, 2007, pg. 20).

⁵ In this paper, electricity is expanded to cover the power/energy sector generally.

property as captured under the Priority Policy Targets 5 (a) of the fifth objective of the NGP (FMWASD, 2007). For effectiveness, the policy was to undergo appraisal every five (5) years with annual gender performance appraisal exercise to assess progress towards targets and the attainment of national, regional and international obligations and commitments (FMWASD, 2007).

After more than a decade in operation, therefore, this paper adopts a literature review approach to re-examine the performance of the NGP in the provision of equal opportunities for women, just like men, to enjoy and attain an acceptable minimum threshold of universal access to social services as outlined in objective 5, target (a) of the policy. Concerns raised in the paper include the problem of measurement with regards to what constitutes an acceptable minimum threshold, the extent to which the policy has helped to close the gender gap regarding differential access to services, and how equitable this has been. To be sure, there is a dearth of literature on gender policy analysis in Nigeria, and in one of the few in-depth analysis of the NGP, Kezie-Nwoha (2007), adopting content analysis of the entire NGP document, among other things, identified the two targets under the fifth objective of the NGP, namely; universal access to social services and women's political participation. However, the author only provided a detailed analysis of the latter. Similarly, Amadi's (2017) review dwelt on the Affirmative Action (AA) principle as contained in objective 5 (b) of the NGP. To our knowledge, none of the reviews of the NGP has explored target (a) of objective 5, the content of which is elucidated in the preceding paragraph. The foregoing underscores the need for the present review.

In the next section, the problem of measurement with regards to what constitutes an acceptable minimum threshold for the social services involved is presented. In section 3, the status of women's access to the four social services contained in target (a) under objective 5 of the NGP is explored. In section 4, the constraints to the attainment of the policy target under consideration are presented. Finally, in the last section we conclude with a summary of our findings and offer suggestions for improvement.

What Constitutes Minimum Threshold of Access with Reference to NGP Objective 5?

Clearly, an appraisal of the objectives outlined in the NGP and the specific target on gender equity with regards to access to the social services listed in objective 5, target (a) under consideration is impossible without a clear definition and understanding of what constitutes "an acceptable minimum threshold" (FMWASD, 2007, p. 20). Incidentally, throughout the entire NGP document, no explanation was made on what constitutes 'minimum thresholds' in terms of quantifiable benchmarks which can facilitate effective monitoring and evaluation of this particular NGP target as was done for the target on political participation which proposed 35% affirmative action in favour of women (FMWASD, 2007). Even an NGP tool like the *National Gender Policy Strategic Framework (Implementation Plan) 2008-2013* which involved a comprehensive plan for implementation of the NGP through the *Strategic Results Framework* (FMWASD, 2008) did not still offer quantifiable benchmarks for women's access to the social services contained in target (a) under objective 5 of the NGP. Similar concerns had earlier been raised by Kezie-Nwoha (2007), to the effect that within the NGP document, there are no clear indicators for monitoring the implementation of the NGP and that lack of indicators for monitoring implementation weakens the mainstreaming process.

To be sure, illustrating gender inequities in access to services within the household is a difficult task. For example, empirical evidence of gender inequalities within the household is rare in scholarly literature since it is difficult to generate. Again, the "human poverty" approach (Charmes, 2006, p. 67) which involves analysis of access to services is also difficult to analyse because all household members are assumed to have equal access to available services. Be that

as it may, the approach that appears to be the most feasible in illustrating gender inequities in access to services is the time approach concerning which Charmes (2006, p. 66) observed:

The time poverty approach is recent and encompasses the strict dimension of access to services. Women are poorer than men in terms of time because they must systematically add up domestic and care duties (reproductive work) to their market or non-market productive work so that this double time-budget makes of time a resource which is more scarce for women than for men.

In section 3 below, the time poverty approach, among other explanatory tools, is applied for a better understanding of gender inequities in access to the services in focus.

The Status of Women's Access to Social Services

We now review the status of women's access to the social services contained in target (a) under objective 5 of the NGP, namely; water and sanitation, electricity [and energy generally], transport services and security of life and property. First on the list is water and sanitation.

Women's Access to Safe⁶ Water and Sanitation

In Nigeria, as in most Sub-Saharan African states, access to safe water is a *highly gendered, physically arduous and time-consuming task* that denies women the opportunity for their optimal development (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). In assessing progress made over the years by women in terms of access to potable water, there are many components. With regards to quantity, the acceptable minimum benchmark per capita daily water use for developing countries is 50 litres (Lawrence et al, 2002, p.6). Again, in terms of spending on water, where a household spends above 5% of income available to it, there is a problem since the ability to pay for other essential necessities guaranteed by human rights such as food, housing and health care will be compromised (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), 2015). This last component is significant in the light of the fact that single parent and female-headed households are on the average more likely to be poor, hence live in the poorest areas with little or no access to government-sponsored services like piped-water and sanitation nor can they afford to pay for such services where they exist (Todaro & Smith, 2011). There is also the time component of access to water, the acceptable benchmark being a round-trip of 30 minutes or less to get water. The time dimension has a great impact on women in Nigeria.

Empirical data from the Nigerian Demographic and Health Surveys for 2009 and 2013 on time and gender involvement in fetching water in Nigeria years after the coming into force of the NGP are contained in Table 1. below as follows:

⁶Safe or improved sources of drinking water are any of the following types of supply: piped water (into dwelling, compound, yard or plot, to neighbour, public tap/standpipe), tube well/borehole, protected well, protected spring and rainwater. On the other hand, an improved sanitation facility is defined as one that hygienically separates human excreta from human contact. Improved sanitation facilities for excreta disposal include flush or pour flush to a piped sewer system, septic tank or pit latrine; ventilated improved pit latrine, pit latrine with slab, and use of a composting toilet (See National Bureau of Statistic, 2018, p. 112).

Table 1: Time and Gender Involvement in Collection of Drinking Water in Nigeria

Time to obtain drinking water (round trip)	2009		2013	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Water on premises	30.0	21.5	23.8	17.2
Less than 30 minutes	52.9	50.4	54.5	54.4
30 minutes or longer	14.6	26.8	20.0	27.6
Don't know/missing	2.6	1.2	1.7	0.9
Total	100	100	100.0	100.0
Person who usually collects drinking water				
Adult female 15+	23.6	26.7	n.a ⁷	n.a
Adult male 15+	18.6	22.3	n.a	n.a
Female child under age 15	4.7	4.0	n.a	n.a
Male child under age 15	3.5	3.8	n.a	n.a
Adult woman with child	3.9	6.4	n.a	n.a
Other	4.2	1.9	n.a	n.a
Water on premises	32.6	24.6	n.a	n.a
Missing	0.2	0.2	n.a	n.a
Total	91.2	89.9	100.0	100.0

Source: NPopC and ICF Macro (2009); NPopC and ICF International (2014).

Certainly, the data above represent the national average. In reality, Nigerian women, as a result of geographical location, hydrological area, climate, and other factors (Lukman et al, 2016), have divergent experiences in relation to access to safe water. Geopolitically, the South-South and South East have the highest access to an improved source of drinking water at 66 and 65 percent respectively while the North East zone has the lowest at 50 percent. Access below 50 percent was found in 7 states in Northern Nigeria namely, Bornu, Gombe, Taraba, Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina and Benue States and three states in Southern Nigeria namely-Enugu, Lagos and Bayelsa states (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2018). Linking this to the gender equity argument, the study by Toonen et al. (2014) found that more households in Southern Nigeria had a water source less than 250m away from them and had a better security situation as compared to households in the North. Thus, fetching of water in the North was mostly done by adult men followed by under 15 boys and in the South by adult women followed by under 15 girls (Toonen et al, 2014). However, in both the North and South, insufficient water infrastructure and unimproved sources still posed problems causing women to trek long distances which consume time in search of safe water (Toonen et al, 2014). One thing is clear: women are still largely responsible for the role of fetching water for household use which results in loss of time for other productive activities and impoverishes women more. This inequitable system confirms the view of Kes and Swaminathan (2006), that a time-and labour-intensive task like collection of drinking water being a non-market task reduces the availability of time to participate in more economically productive activities.

Regarding the sanitation component, Nigeria has recorded steady improvement in access over the years (NBS, 2018). Expectedly, the percentage of access to sanitation facilities varies significantly among states with the highest rate (94 percent) reported in Lagos and the lowest rate (16 percent) in Zamfara and Kebbi, respectively while 30 percent of households had no facility at all or used open defecation (NBS, 2018). For women, however, the post-NGP

⁷The data on persons who usually collect drinking water for the household was not captured in the 2013 survey. Hence, it is represented with 'n.a' (not available) in the table above.

sanitation era in Nigeria is still characterised by insufficient sanitation facilities with seasonal variations and high cost of accessing water (Toonen et al, 2014), and inadequate quantity for flushing modern toilets. This results in unclean toilets unsafe for women's use which makes them (as well as those who do not have facility at all) resort to open defecation with the attendant embarrassment, indignity, and often sexual violence attached (See also Kulkarni et al, 2017). For women, therefore, there are still concerns for equity in access in terms of the time spent in accessing safe water and safe sanitation facilities suitable to their peculiar nature.

Women's Access to Energy

Men and women differ in the purposes for which they need and use energy and in their levels of access. As a result, access to energy and its impact on poverty affects men and women differently (Dutta et al, 2017). Most importantly, access to clean cooking energy is particularly a gendered issue because women are primarily responsible for cooking in virtually all cultures and in developing countries, rural women and girls are the primary collectors of wood and residue fuels which account for 80% of household energy use (ENERGIA International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, 2014; Onyekuru&Apeh, 2017; Megbowon et al, 2018). Nonetheless, in the past, energy access programmes and policies have focused mainly on providing electricity connections to the neglect of cooking energy (ENERGIA International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, 2014). Surely, policy planning for energy sector development has generally been gender neutral (Cain et al, 2016).

Nigeria has one of the lowest rates of electricity generation per capita in Africa. Although Nigeria has mandated a National Gender Policy, there are still significant gender gaps (Cain et al, 2016). Of interest is data from the Nigerian Demographic and Health Surveys for 2009 and 2013 as shown below:

Table 2: Source of Energy/Power used by Households

	2009		2013	
Electricity	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Yes	84.8	31.4	83.6	34.4
No	15.0	68.3	16.3	65.4
Missing	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cooking Fuel				
Electricity	0.7	0.1	0.7	0.2
LPG/natural gas/biogas	3.0	0.4	4.6	0.5
Kerosene	51.6	11.3	47.6	8.7
Coal/lignite	0.6	0.2	0.7	0.0
Charcoal	4.1	1.8	5.3	1.6
Wood	36.6	82.5	37.9	83.3
Straw/shrubs/grass	0.7	0.9	0.2	3.1
Agricultural crop*	0.0	0.2	-	-
Animal dung	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
No food cooked in household	2.5	2.4	2.9	2.4
Other	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Missing	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: NPopC and ICF Macro (2009); NPopC and ICF International (2014).

The data in Table 2 above confirms the findings of Megbowon et al. (2018) that on grounds of easy accessibility and lower cost, wood (being the most used cooking fuel in rural areas) and kerosene (which is used more in urban areas) have been the main choices of fuel energy for cooking by most households in Nigeria from 2003 which represents the Pre-NGP era to 2015 nearly a decade after the NGP (See also Gujba et al, 2015; Dioha&Emodi, 2019). In addition, the drop in the use of kerosene and increase in the use of charcoal and wood is obvious and corroborates the observation by Eleri et al. (2012) that deepening poverty has forced a reversal in the transition to modern and efficient energy forms with more Nigerians resorting to traditional biomass energy forms.

This trend of the continual dominant nature and use of wood fuel for cooking in Nigeria is worrisome, especially with regards to women. First, in the country, the probability of a household using charcoal and firewood as a cooking fuel energy option increases with having a female as the head of the household (Megbowon et al, 2018). Surely, the low economic status of female headed households in comparison to male headed ones increases the likelihood of such households utilising less expensive fuel like charcoal for cooking despite the threat this poses to their health. This is also a pointer to the vulnerability to poverty and lower standard of living of women and consequently such households they head (Megbowon et al, 2018; Onyeneke et al, 2019). In the second place, as earlier pointed out, females are mostly responsible for cooking as a part of house chores (Onyekuru&Apeh, 2017) and are often saddled with the duty to collect firewood from the forest for their cooking activities. Lastly, it also questions the effort, determination and investment by the Nigerian government in improving the standard of living of the people and reducing energy poverty in particular (Megbowon et al, 2018).

Geopolitically, considering the high poverty rate in the Northern region of Nigeria, people in states within the region are more likely to use charcoal, firewood and other biomass fuels as main cooking fuel notwithstanding that the area is also the most wood deficit as a result of desertification and deforestation (Megbowon et al, 2018; Eleri et al, 2012). This could be a pointer to the plight of women in relation to fetching firewood mostly in rural areas in Northern Nigeria, compared to their Southern region counterparts.

During the rains, blowing wet wood gathered from forests, in an effort to cook for their household, increases the time women spend in cooking at the expense of other income generating activities. Meanwhile in 2002 alone, indoor air pollution from the use of solid fuels for cooking led to more than 79,000 deaths of women and mostly under-five children and 2.6 million disability adjusted life years (Accenture, 2011). Women and children are not only exposed to air pollution as a result of hazardous cookstoves and other forms of fuel they resorted to as a result of poverty and neglect but are also victims of serious illnesses such as childhood pneumonia, lung cancer, blindness and often death (Global Impact, 2019). Furthermore, available data shows that in Nigeria, there were 68,582 females as against 233,072 male workers in the electricity, gas and water industry (JICA, 2011a, citing FMWASD, 2008b). In this regard, it should be noted that effective gender mainstreaming ensures that women as well as men participate and benefit from energy access both as household consumers and entrepreneurs (Dutta et al, 2017).

Energy sector initiatives like that by the Nigerian Alliance for Clean Cookstoves (NACC) which sought to distribute 30 million clean and energy efficient cook stoves from 2015-2020, and 10 million clean cookstoves for households in Nigeria by 2021 (International Centre for Energy Environment and Development (ICEED), 2017; Accenture, 2011), and several other efforts abound (see for example, CLASP, 2017; Rural Women Energy Security (RUWES), Nigeria, 2019). However, with approximately 730,000 improved cookstoves (ICS)

sold or distributed in 2015 (although this were self-reported sales seen as an underestimate given that not all ICS sales in Nigeria were captured) compared to Nigeria's 36 million households nationwide, much needs to be done (CLASP, 2017). All in all, the real rural energy crisis is rural women's time and drudgery with women working longer work days than men in providing human energy for survival activities such as fuel gathering and water carrying, cooking, food processing, among other tasks (ENERGIA International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, 2014).

Women's Access to Transportation Services

Globally, transport is not gender-neutral but skewed against women (Carvajal & Alam, 2018). Similarly, in Nigeria, gender inequity in the transportation sector abounds and has not receded despite the NGP. For instance, in executing the social re-orientation project, the Kano State Government through its *Adaidaita Sahu* in 2014 banned the operations of commercial motorcyclists which was a popular means of transportation from carrying female passengers to prevent interaction between men and women in the intra-city passenger transport (Adetoro et al, 2019). However, as a result of political differences, the project was later scrapped by another administration. Adetoro et al. (2019) found that in the same state, after more than a decade of the NGP, there is a *Hisbah* board, a security agency whose duties cut across social services and religious and coercive disciplinary functions, including monitoring women's use of transport service in Kano metropolis, especially in the areas of choice of transport service and sitting pattern in public transport (See also Izadinia, 2015, p. 130 on the use of the Iranian "morality police" against women wearing "bad hijab" under former president Ahmadinejad). A specific rule which followed is for passengers to sit in different vehicles based on their gender, and even when they sit in the same vehicle, "women are not allowed to sit shoulder to shoulder with and or between men" (Adetoro et al, 2019, p. 8). The study showed that this practice creates physical stress and additional financial burden for female passengers in a bid to conform to the rule.

In another study, Usman and Akinola (2017) found that more of the female students opted to walk to school for fear of sexual harassment on public transport. In addition, while most of the male students usually travelled to school with any mode of transport available, the mode of transportation for females was based on an assessment of their personal safety even if it meant paying higher transport fares. Furthermore, female students experience more verbal, physical abuse and long waiting at bus stops. Similarly, the usual long queues at bus stops and regular physical struggles involved in boarding taxi cabs often expose the female students to various forms of harassment as targets of touts, pick pockets and other social miscreants at bus stops and while on-board vehicles especially at night (Usman & Akinola, 2017). Indeed, the foregoing confirms the observation by Berg et al. (2017), that crime in transport is a serious issue in developing countries.

In the post-NGP era in Nigeria, there were 96,300 females as against 1,308,250 male workers in the transport and communication industry (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2011a, citing FMWASD, 2008b), reflecting the fact that majority of motor transport companies, shipping lines and private airlines are owned and managed by a predominantly senior male staff with women serving mostly as ticket clerks, sales girls and similar lower positions. In addition, gender-role prejudices has continued to dissuade most women from serving as bus or motorbike drivers and it is only in few cases in Nigeria that women have been recruited or operate independently as bus drivers (see Okon & Richard, 2017; Carvajal & Alam, 2018). As a result of the foregoing, the existing transport system in Nigeria limits business growth for a greater number of female entrepreneurs (Crown Agents, 2014).

Security of Lives and Property of Women in Nigeria

Years after the coming into effect of the NGP in Nigeria, available evidence indicates that not much has changed in terms of the security of lives and property of women. For instance, the percentage of women who reported to have ever experienced intimate or non-intimate partner violence inflicted on them by men was 30 percent on average between 2001 and 2011 and was particularly high among the group who are widowed or divorced (JICA, 2011a). Later, in 2012, it was reported by Amnesty International (2012), that domestic violence, rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in Nigeria by state officials and individuals remained rife and the authorities consistently failed to prevent and address such sexual violence, or hold perpetrators to account. In fact, it is acknowledged as justified for a husband to beat or commit violence against his wife in Nigeria over domestic disputes and marital rape is not a valid concept (JICA, 2011a; World Bank, 2019). Yet, these forms of male-perpetrated gender-based violence were the basis for the promulgation of the NGP in 2006.

Another threat to the security of lives of girls and women in Nigeria is human trafficking. The government statistics in 2004 and 2005, being the pre-NGP period, reported that about 80 percent of victims were girls and more than 300 children had been forced into the sex industry and domestic labour in 2005 (JICA, 2011a citing FMWASD, 2008). A similar UNESCO commissioned study found that a decade prior to the NGP, thousands of women and young girls were trafficked into the sex industry, especially in Europe (Olagbegi et al, 2006). Several years later, and with a gender policy in place, the trend in human trafficking is shown below.

Table 3: Rescued Victims of Human Trafficking by Gender⁸

Year	Females	Males	Total	%Females
2018	983	190	1173	83.8
2017	246	99	345	71.1
2016	820	197	1017	80.6
2015	691	203	894	77.2
2014	510	520	1030	49.5
2013	504	460	964	52.2
2012	607	142	749	81.0

Source: National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons (NAPTIP) reports. To this end, therefore, the greater percentage of victims of human trafficking in Nigeria has continued to be women and girls despite the NGP's target with regards to their safety. To illuminate further, data from NAPTIP (for the period, 2012-2018) shows that although trafficking is perpetrated in almost all the states of the federation, Edo state has the highest number of victims of trafficking in Nigeria (see also Olagbegi et al, 2006), followed by Kano in the Northern region, among others. As corroborated by NAPTIP (2020), women and girls account for as much as 70% of human trafficking victims in the Southern part of Nigeria with Edo and Delta States making up to 50% of victims trafficked from that region. To exemplify further, victims are procured often for labor exploitation (mostly internally) but virtually for sexual exploitation or prostitution internally and externally in Asia and Europe (NAPTIP, 2020). Although several factors are involved, poverty is the most visible cause of the vulnerability of women and children to trafficking in Nigeria (Olagbegi et al, 2006). An

⁸Data available from <http://www.naptip.gov.ng/about-naptip-2/data-analysis-report/> [Accessed 12 January 2020]. Also, the figure for 2017 is for the First Quarter.

evolving dimension in the trafficking of women and girls which had earlier been brought to limelight by Olagbegi et al. (2006, p. 31) is 'baby harvesting' or the 'baby factories' phenomena, mostly in Southern parts of Nigeria (see also Austrian Red Cross and Austrian Centre for Country of Origin & Asylum Research and Documentation [ACCORD], 2017; Eteng et al, 2021).

Along the same lines, in North East Nigeria, between 2009 and 2016, thousands of women and girls had been abducted, raped, forced into marriage or used as suicide bombers in many incidents by Boko Haram terrorists. The climax which attracted international attention was the abduction of more than 200 girls from Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Borno state on 14 April 2014 (Amnesty International, 2015; Amnesty International, 2016). The direct human casualties from the Boko Haram insurgency in North East Nigeria had surpassed 32,000, most of them women and children (UNDP, 2018). For a deeper study on Boko Haram and human security see Nnam et al, 2020). Worse still, in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in North East Nigeria, sheltering victims of the Boko Haram crises, incidences of sex trafficking and sexual abuse of IDPs, with the complicity of security and camp officials have been established (Amnesty International, 2016; Austrian Red Cross & ACCORD, 2017). Generally, just as in the pre-NGP period (See for example JICA, 2011a), in the post-NGP period in Northern Nigeria, early or forced marriage, mostly in rural areas, is still prevalent (often above 60% in some states in Northern Nigeria) and poses severe health challenges to the victims (World Bank, 2019).

Another key indicator for assessing the extent of the realisation of the NGP goals, with regards to security of women's lives is the maternal mortality ratio as captured below.

Table 4: Maternal Mortality in Nigeria: Pre-NGP Period (2006 and below)

Year	Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000 live births)
2000	Not available
2001	700
2002	Not available
2003	1,100
2004	800
2005	800
2006	800

Source: UNDP Human Development Reports⁹, 2000-2006.

From Table 4 above, except for 2003 in which the maternal mortality was above 1,000, there was a relative stability in the figure for the three-year period preceding the effective date of the NGP in 2007.

Table 5: Maternal Mortality: Post-NGP Period (2007-2019)

Year	Maternal Mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)
2007/2008	1,100
2009	Not available
2010	1,100
2011/2012	840
2013	630
2014	630

⁹These UNDP HDRs (2000-2019) were retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/global-reports>.

2015	560
2016	814
2017	Not available
2018	814
2019	814

Source: UNDP Human Development Reports, 2007-2019.

Surprisingly and contrary to expectations, as the data in Table 5 above indicate, the maternal mortality for the period after the NGP took effect in 2007 recorded a sharp increase from 800 to 1100 for almost a four-year period (2007-2010). What is more, while the figure came down again in 2011 with further gains made from 2013-2015, things got worse in 2016 with the maternal mortality shooting back to 814 (per 100,000 live births). Therefore, from the 6th position in 2001, prior to the introduction of the NGP, among countries with a high record of maternal mortality, Nigeria became the country with the 4th worst situation in terms of maternal mortality in 2016, ten years after the implementation of the NGP, and has retained that position till date. This indicates that the NGP has performed poorly as a tool for achieving the security of lives of women in Nigeria.

Constraints to the Attainment of the Policy Target

The factors that have hampered the achievement of the NGP target under consideration are considered below with a chunk of the blame going to leadership failure on the part of the state.

Leadership Failure

The most obvious manifestation of leadership failure as a possible explanation for the observed gender inequity in access to the social services so far discussed is weak political will. For instance, the United Nations (2009, p. 22) reported that “The Nigerian *Violence Prohibition Bill*, if enacted, would create a National Commission on Violence Against Women fully funded by the government to, amongst other things, monitor and supervise the implementation of the provisions of the Act.” However, that was never done, possibly, to protect the perpetrators who could be men of influence.

The role of corruption by successive administrations in Nigeria cannot also be ruled out as a possible constraint to the realisation of the NGP targets under review. For instance, the role of Nigerian security operatives, immigration authorities, courts and other public sector officials as collaborators in the external trafficking of girls is well documented (Austrian Red Cross & ACCORD, 2017). In fact, Nigeria has become synonymous with different dimensions of bribery and corruption such that public funds are often misappropriated or poorly allocated in favour of certain offices or individuals and not in the interest of those most in need, a situation which impedes smooth governance. For example, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development which is the coordinating ministry for the NGP is underfunded and lacks the capacity to effectively coordinate and operationalize policies (World Bank, 2019). Indeed, the fact that high corruption level was associated with low governance in Africa and Nigeria in particular had earlier been brought to limelight by McFerson (2017). Corruption is the bane of extreme poverty in Nigeria (Ajakaiye, et al, 2014; ActionAid, 2015; Danaan, 2018).

On the other hand, most women’s empowerment programmes are now implemented ‘in conjunction’ with the *Office of the First Lady* (usually, the wife of the Governor at the state level or the President at the federal level). The *First Ladies* adopt a *welfarist* approach to women’s development in which women are seen as passive beneficiaries of government ‘welfare packages’, and the programmes are run along party lines, hence geared towards

promoting party image and interest, rather than question the status quo. This arrangement does not address the *strategic gender needs* of women which are needs that will grant women greater freedom to realise their potentials like the control of their time and body.

There is also the problem of a weak legislative and administrative framework. In this regard, subsequent administrations have failed to bring a *gender perspective* to bear in their policy planning, legislation and transformation activities against what was proposed by the NGP. As a result, only very few legislations touch women's lives directly and although gender focal points were set up in other related ministries and government offices (the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development being the core ministry for gender issues), coordination among ministries and offices has not been adequate (JICA, 2011a).

Social and Cultural Orientation

Women's attitude towards themselves makes matters worse. In the Nigeria Demographic and Household Survey for 2008, over 40 percent of all women aged 15-49 agreed with at least one specific reason that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife for (NPC, 2009). In recent years, this acceptance of wife beating by women aged 15-49 for a domestic misunderstanding is still high with a national average of 34.7% (World Bank, 2019) and as a form of gender based violence, it could be attributed to the lasting negative mental effect of patriarchy on women and remains a huge impediment to efforts at gender equity in Nigeria. Similar practises linked to patriarchal thinking and applicable in the Nigerian context abound with far-reaching negative implications (see for example Chakraborty, 2017).

Knowledge, Research and Data Limitations

A target set to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment is mainstreaming of Gender Studies in the taught and evaluated curriculum of all formal and non-formal education institutions/courses from primary to tertiary levels by 2010 (FMWASD, 2007). Till date, that target has not materialised. Again, evidence-based planning through the NGP is yet to be achieved as a result of dearth of comprehensive sex-disaggregated data. Outside International bodies, funding of research that captures high quality sex-disaggregated data is limited (see also, Kezie-Nwoha, 2014).

Conclusion and recommendations

To recapitulate, the NGP, among other objectives, had a mandate of gender equality in access to social services as captured under the Priority Policy Targets 5 (a) of the fifth objective of the NGP (FMWASD, 2007). However, after more than a decade of coming into force, this study reviews that target, in order to understand progress made as well as limitations, and finds that it has fared below expectation. Furthermore, available data seems to indicate so far that weak governance remains a serious clog in the wheel of progress among other problems.

Given the findings made so far, the following suggestions for improvement are made below. First, for the effectiveness of the gender policy with regard to the policy target that concerns access to services, the time dimension must clearly be highlighted and incorporated into programme reforms, capacity building and skill development, legislation, and monitoring and evaluation. This will go a long way in facilitating easier policy performance and gender impact assessment. As Charmes (2006, p. 67) asserted, "The time poverty approach thus opens new horizons for policy purposes."

Secondly, there is a need for governments at all levels to display the political will to implement the provisions of the NGP with emphasis on both equality and equity. A starting point, as provided for in the NGP, could be embarking on gender-specific projects through "special initiatives [to] reduce the number of citizens in core poverty groups particularly women by 2012" (FMWASD, 2007, p. 20). Such initiatives targeted explicitly on women as

poverty reduction tools “are needed not to replace but to complement the growth-promotion and the general poverty-reduction programs” (McFerson, 2017, p. 66). For example, a women-only taxi service has been advocated in some quarters as an initiative that could give women more control over their transport needs (Crown Agents, 2014). Similarly, there have been calls for the government to facilitate access to improved cook-stoves which is linked to a substantial reduction in time spent on fuelwood collection and cooking which increases women’s time use and productivity (Onyeneke et al, 2019). Other initiatives are related to energy sector employment (Cain et al, 2016; Dutta et al, 2017).

Besides, the practice at the Federal, State and Local Government levels in Nigeria of channelling of strategic women empowerment programmes and projects to be executed through the Office of the *First Lady*, being a temporary political position occupied by wives of politicians should be discontinued, as it violates the provision of the NGP to the effect that:

Sector specific reforms can only be driven by technocrats and professionals who have been equipped with requisite skills to deliver on gender targets and operate gender systems such as the gender budgeting, gender management systems, gender auditing and performance evaluation. (FMWASD, 2007, p. 25)

Most importantly, these politicians do not share the same understanding of gender equality and the vision and mission of women’s empowerment of the technocrats and professionals in gender-related Ministries, Departments and Agencies such as the Ministry of Gender and Social Development. As such, their activities are based on political party interest. A change in this regard, therefore, requires a strong political will.

Again, while acknowledging the social construction of gender, women should believe in themselves, question their present status in relation to that of men in all ramifications, and seek for a balance in those areas that touch on power relations with men, mostly, power over their time, their stock of knowledge and resources (including their body) and so on.

The introduction of Gender Studies as a General Studies course in tertiary institutions and as a core subject in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria will provide an unbiased, standardised, far-reaching and effective platform for knowledge on gender equality and equity. Government and non-governmental agencies should also sponsor more studies on the dimensions of gender inequality to minimise the problem of dearth of gender-disaggregated data necessary for planning, monitoring and evaluation of the policy goals and targets.

Finally, there is a need for a bottom-up approach to the issue of access to social services as opposed to the top-down approach that has been prevalent in the execution of programmes and projects under the gender policy. This can best be achieved through the systematic encouragement and support of collective action in the form of what McFerson (2017, p. 67) described as “fostering bonding networks” among different groups of women, and can be extended further by tapping into “connections capital” which involves collective action with the economic and political power holders.

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