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## Enhancing Women Education for a Sustainable Environmental Development

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### ABSTRACT

Women represent a good proportion of any society's Population and they have been known to have contributed in very many ways to the development and betterment of the society of most nations, notably the developed nations. In Nigeria, Women are the Primary environment mangers, extractors and the users of environmental resource, so they have close affinity with the environment. The rural women relate with nature to provide the basis for their day-to-day struggle for survival. They have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecological sound consumption, Production Patterns and approaches to natural resources management. This paper focuses on strategies that will aid women to better cope with maintaining the environment in their multi-faceted roles. It is the view of this paper that, urgent attention should be given to the education of women if true and Sustainable environmental development is to be achieved.

**Keywords:** Women Education, Sustainable Environmental Development, Consumption. Production

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#### **Aims Research Journal Reference Format:**

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In spite of the clause in the Nigeria constitution on the equality of all irrespective of race, sex or gender, it is still a reality that the women suffer from some inequality with regards to access to education. Sen and Grown (1988) noted that general gender based subordination is deeply ingrained in the consciousness of both men and women and usually viewed as a natural corollary of the biological difference between them. They go further to note that it is reinforced through religious beliefs, cultural practices and even educational system (both traditional and modern) that assign to women lesser status and power.

Education in the life of any nation is unavoidably linked with the pace of development in the nation. National development is the Process of nation building which bring about national unity and enhances the quality of the people who live in it. The concern for the environment calls for a concerted efforts and can be used as a reliable indices of the potential of national development. It is in recognition of the importance of education that developed nations devote a good part of their economy to develop this area.

Development goals cannot be achieved successfully without the inclusion of women which constitute about half the population of this nation but make up only a very small percent of the workforce. When the education of women fall behide that of men, there are more danger to the women and the society for it leads to inequality between men and women. This situation makes less part in decision making in their families and the society. Education should be seen as a means of acquiring knowledge which equips an individual with skills to cope with the problems of everyday life.

## **2. WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Women have a powerful role in influencing sustainable consumption decisions. But women are marginalized at most levels of formulation and decision making in natural resources, environmental management, protection health facilities (educational and domestic) and rehabilitation (Ibhaficion-momodu 2016). Experience and skills in advocacy and monitory of proper natural resource too often remain marginalized in policy and decision making bodies. Most women living in oil producing areas faces the difficulties of environmental degradation occasional by gas flaring and oil exploration, which destroys their lands, and pollute the fish farms and the air. The lack of modern infrastructure and knowledge of the use of modern environment safe technology is another factor (s) that affect women. Inadequate waste disposal system, improper sewage disposal, reliance on polluted water for domestic water supplier, poor drainage system, damage to farm lands by pipelines leakages, oil blowouts, smokes from rickety and old vehicles use of ozone depleting substances such as products with chlorofluoro-carbons, halons and methyl bromides (from plastic and foams) smoke from bush burning etc. severely affect the atmosphere. All these have some effects on the women's health such as cancer, eye damage, cardio-vascular disease and infertility leading to weakened immune system and poverty.

## **3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF EDUCATION**

The word education in its simplest from according to O'Dornell (1997) is the process by which people develop their faculties in order that they may play their part in society. It also means acquiring functional literacy, knowledge and skills for productive activity. It also include the non-formal education which may or may not lead to the granting of prestige laden certificate or diploma having a general recognized social and economic value to be specific, education empowers, liberates and brings about increased productivity. It is not just the acquisition of knowledge, but the acquisition of art of utilization of knowledge. Education can be gotten right from child hood or through a second chance type such as adult education classes or other non-governmental bodies or agencies.

The broad aims of the Nigeria educational system deal with worthwhile objectives that we as Nigerian aspire to achieve through the system. Following its recognition of the power of education on the populace, the federal government of Nigeria has stated that the expects education to:

- (a) Inculcate national consciousness and national unity
- (b) Inculcate the right type of value and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- (c) Train the mind in understanding of the world around
- (d) Acquire appropriate skills abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society (NPE, 1981). In line with these aims and objectives spelt out in the National policy on education, coupled with the focus of these paper in particular, for women to face the challenge of our time full participation requires that they have access to the benefits of formal education to the same level and of the same quality as that given to the men. Only in this way can women provide their full imputs.

#### **4. THE FIVE COMPONENTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WHEN EDUCATED**

There are some processes by which women gain power and control when educated over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choice. These components are:

- (1) Women's sense of self worth
- (2) Their right to have and to determine choices
- (3) Their right to have access to opportunities and resources.
- (4) Their right to have power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home and
- (5) The ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order nationally and internationally.

In this context, education, training, awareness raising, building self confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources, and actions to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality and important tools for empowering women and girls to claim their rights (EIGE, 2024)

#### **5. EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL MAINTENANCE**

When the environment is poorly maintained and pollution occurs the female gender is worse hit. Most women spend a lot of time working on the farm, keep the home, rear children, improve sanitary conditions and provide potable water. They ensure the resource are provided for children and adults nutritional needs and health care (Rakyia 2007). These responsibilities revealed that women and their environment are inseparable 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of all working hours and received only ten percent of world's income. They own less than 1 percent of world property, yet represent half of the world's population (Ayanleke 2007). When the environment is polluted, women are most affected. Majority of these women lack access to education, decision making power, health care delivery, capital and resources (Okediran 1988). Even these contributions are generally unrecognized. They are burdened by unpaid task that are taken for granted by the community.



**Fig 1: 100 Million Girls, Women Worldwide Can't Read Single Sentence-UNESCO**  
**Source:** <https://www.africanexaminer.com/100-million-girls-women-worldwide-cant-read-single-sentence-unesco/>

Among rural dwellers where men migrate to search for love to make their environment trouble free, most illiterate people in the world are women. This put them at a disadvantage. A glance at school enrolment will reveal a glaring disparity between boys and girls. In many developing nations, women education is relegated to the background. They are given privileges to attend school only when the men had been taken care off. They bear burden of caring of the aged, their husbands and children. Even when diseases like HIV strikes, the girl child is withdrawn from school to cater for the sick when additional source of finance is needed in family, girl children are withdrawn from school or made to hawk ware on specific market days to increase family finance. On the days they are withdrawn from school, they cannot learn what others have learnt.

This leads to poor performance in school and eventually they drop out. Where school fees are charged and the family cannot afford to send all children to school, the girl child is usually withdrawn to give place to the boy. The result is that the girl child is not well prepared to manage the environment successfully; she cannot appreciate the importance of maintaining the environment. For women to manage the environment successfully there is need to increase women capacity by providing policies, programmes and projects that positively impact upon the women, this could be done by providing economic emancipation for the female gender. Women men should be partners in the achievement of gender equality.

Education is to be used as tool for helping women to maintain a society free of pollution. Their lack of access to education cumulates in their lack of decision making power. Patriarchy inheritance pattern also deny women's access to land and unmovable properties. These put a disadvantaged position. If women are educated, they will be empowered financially, which in turn increase their decision making power. When they are empowered financially, they can venture into buying landed properties outside their family's land.

This will get them interested in preservation of the environment. Customary practices such as early marriage that deny women access to education should be curbed and child support should be available for women who are nursing children so that they can continue their education. Both rural and urban women should be integrated into environmental management programmes. Government should evolve legislation and strategies that will provide women's access to full participation in development and give her access to control resources.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Naturally, women expectations for the future is that these obstacles, to their development which characterize the lives of women can today will be addressed and made a thing of the past, so that they can fully belong to the development as the environment as partners with men. The popular slogan that when you educate a woman you educate a nation should apply to Nigeria. When women that educate children are ignorant, they can only give what they have, they can only give what they have, they can only produce generations of ignoramus. When women are well educated, they could do their work with less effort. A large proportion of Nigerian women can read nor write, but many of them listen to news on the radio and television and relate whatever they hear or see to one another.

## **7. RECOMMENDATION**

Education on environmental related issues, development and maintenance can be relayed on radio, television and other means of mass media. Women should be sensitized to understand their roles on environmental development maintenance and protection so that they can improve themselves. Parents and religious leaders at the grass root should be involved in this education: this means that the community itself needs the enlightenment. Scientific and programmatic training should be given to improve women and children's health. This will improve their standard of living and that of their families and these knowledge will help Nigeria to achieve a sustainable environmental development.

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