**ABSTRACT:**

The role and place of women in the world cannot be underestimated. In governance, politics, military, commerce, industry, high-tech, agriculture. Imagine a world without Angela Markel; Hillary Clinton; Margaret Thatcher; Indira Gandhi; Mrs Gates; Mrs Zuckerberg and all the Who’s Who in World Women. In agriculture, they are the bedrock from ancient times. As men go for hunting expedition, the women engage in gathering and nurture of natural resources to put food on the family’s table. Even before the US launching of “Cooperative Extension” in 1914 and the UN World Conference on Women in 1995 there is no denying the fact that women were relegated to the background by men in all realms of life. Thanks to many women liberation movements that have identified and liberated women especially in developed countries. Today, women are nearly ruling the world. In agriculture, they have been identified as pillars for sustainable development and livelihood. Hence, our agricultural extension services must put women as the insurance for averting world food catastrophes as world population leap in bounds. Currently at over 6 billion and projected to reach 9 billion in 2050.

**KEY WORDS**  
Participatory democracy, Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainable Agricultural Development, Women in Agriculture, Agriculture Extension Services; Poverty Alleviation; Gender Equality, National Economy.

**INTRODUCTION**

The FAO (FAO 2000) laments that despite the roles played by women in agriculture, very few of them own or control productive resources. These include land, credit, technical services, market outlet and information. This has added to their long standing socio-economic status which subjects them generally to be unable to take key decisions over the use of resources and benefits accruing from agriculture. At the UN World Conference on Women in 1995 at Beijing, China a radical change was advocated. The priority areas identified included areas directly related to agricultural and natural resources; power sharing; decision making and safeguarding the environment (FAO 2000; FAO 2007; UN 2001; World Bank 2000; World Bank 2003).

Agricultural extension on global note is the transfer of useful technologies and practices from researches to farmers that are vital for changing socio-economic welfare of the beneficiaries. This role of agricultural extension has captured male advantage to the detriment of women (Ugwuoke 2015). No minding that globally gender is the essential variable for the roles, responsibilities, opportunities, incentives, costs and benefits of each profession, including agriculture. For example, the FAO (FAO, 1997) reminds us that women’s access to agricultural facilities must begin with the analysis of men’s and women’s participation in agricultural production. Nearly, all development practitioners consider gender equality. In Nigeria, the political class has even introduced 30% for women at local, state and national government. The 1995 United Nation International Conference on women gave rise to Beijing Action for Women Advancement, a tool for...
redressing the gender blind approach to development that ignored and marginalized women in particular (Ugwuoke 2015). In Africa, men are also marginalized as instruments of war and family dependence for eternity even where the man is dying or have died, he is still being recalled to come back and continue his man work or role of fending perpetually for children and wives; even where the women are richer than men. By culture the man remains the bread winner of the family, come rain, come sunshine, come life, come death forever and ever. The arising from this Beijing Action Plan for Women Advancement included power sharing between man and woman. The Common Wealth Secretariat (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999) adopted gender equality as international approach fit for advancing gender equality and equity in the society. The Secretary recommended national inclusion of gender perspectives into development policies, plans, programmes and projects to ensure their impact on women and men in equitable way. To Ugwuoke (Ugwuoke 2015) gender advancement should lessen focus from channeling assistance to women as a larger group to promoting gender as a development goal. The worker suggested adding men’s concerns, interest, knowledge, opportunities into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all legislation, policies and programmes that will strike equality between men and women in the distribution and sharing of responsibilities and outputs.

Thus, development initiatives are now advocating gender equitable access to society’s resources, including socially valued goods, rewards and opportunities. The Beijing Action Plan points the practical implications of gender equality which goes beyond women’s participation. According to Ugwuoke (Ugwuoke 2015) it brings into account the expenses, knowledge and interests of women and men to programme design and implementation. Hence, the integration of equality concerns into the analysis and formulation of policies, programmes and budgets which will ensure they have positive impact across gender. This will in turn reduce or eliminate disparities. This has brought the three basic Rs: roles, responsibilities, relations, rights, resources and representations. The roles indicates actual and potential contributions of women and men, responsibilities engenders the roles in terms of concerns and the constraints and opportunity related to these; the relations between women and men and how these are reflected on household and community levels and help eliminate differences and inequalities between women and men; the resources and rights includes the experiences of women and men in terms of access to and control over resources and the control over resources and the securing of human right; while the representations of women and men in decision making processes, both formal and informal and the need to promote more equitable involvement of women in decision making where inequalities are observed (UN, 2001).

The World Bank (World Bank, 2000) laments on number of areas where progress in advancing gender equality has not been significant which represent challenges for the future. These include: women’s lack of access to land, other resources entitlements and inputs such as credit and technology. Others include women’s limited roles in planning and formulation of policy in agriculture; women’s lack of access to extension services and technology based on cultural practices and norms. As town criers the 1995 Common Wealth Plan of Action on gender and development sets forth a number of problematic areas for the advancement of gender equality vital for sustainable development. This paper reviews the place of agricultural extension services in supporting women in agriculture in Nigeria.

**AGRICULTURE AND GENDER EQUALITY**

Agriculture contributes a major share to the Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) in national economies of most developing countries such as Nigeria (World Bank, 2000). This has called continually for sustainable linkages between agricultural performance and other sectors for meaningful output and income. Government macroeconomic objectives have always included employment generation, poverty alleviations, food security, and human resources development. To achieve their goals for agricultural development has warranted some elements of gender equality as women have always played an important role in agriculture (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999). In Africa, over 72% of the rural women are involved in agriculture compared to 53% counterpart rural men (Ugwuoke 2015). The ratio of male to female workers in agriculture is estimated at 1:1.5 with women contributing 70–75% of agricultural labour (Ugwuoke 2015).

In Nigeria, women assist men in food production, processing, marketing and utilization. To this end, Ugwuoke (Ugwuoke 2015) estimated that gender balance can yield 80% food production in Nigeria. According to the author, gender balance would help narrow the gap between women productive, reproductive and community roles which are not taken into account in development process and food production. This...
will also level involvement in decision making, control of assets and resources, access to productive inputs, credit, and information and extension services. The worker also argues that participatory extension delivery system is difficult to achieve in the real sense of methodology in isolation of gender equality.

According to Ugwuoke (Ugwuoke 2015), project experiences over the last twenty years have raised debate concerning the role of public sector agricultural extension in strategies to increase agricultural productivity and in alleviating rural poverty. The dominant approach in World Bank supported projects since the early 1980s under the Training and Visit (T & V) System has used the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) extension system to accelerate the adoption of new technologies. This is via intensive regular interaction between government extension agents and selected contract farmers in information dissemination process. However, Ugwuoke (Ugwuoke 2015) regrets that the T & V System of ADP is highly hierarchical, directive and not very flexible. Hence, this constitutes cog in the wheel to real participation of the farmers or the orientation of the services towards their needs. Consequently, the results of investment in training and visits system of ADP have sometimes been very disappointing and unsatisfactory regarding sustainability; especially when World Bank withdraws counterpart funding from benefitting countries (World Bank, 2003).

Despite the increased awareness and the availability of information on existing gender disparities in agriculture, the current participatory extension services have not successfully addressed gender in the design and implantation of the services especially in most part of Nigeria especially Southeast Nigeria. The women have limited access to extension services due to a number of factors. These include lack of awareness of different gender roles and needs in the curricular and training of extension workers (FAO 1999; Ugwuoke 2015). There has also been inadequate gender attention in the development of technologies for crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry. The provision of agricultural services in male dominated and yet no efforts have been made to train men to work with women and to be aware of the strategic and practical needs of women within agriculture (FAO 1996).

Similarly, the planning and implementation of such programmes have largely ignored the multiple roles of women (Ugwuoke 2015). The assumption that training and information provided to men will be transferred to women farmers in their households does not hold true in most cases. According to Ugwuoke (Ugwuoke 2015) the primary focus of agricultural research and extension is based on the assumption that once men receive the knowledge, it automatically trickles down to women. Thus, there has been a tendency to neglect and ignore women farmers in the delivery of extension messages. Furthermore, one of the disappointment of the 1980s, according to the author was the misconception that many of the agrarian reforms improves the position of women in relation to men with regards to access to land, as titles has been transferred to men, who were assumed to household heads. There also existed a severe imbalance in agricultural extension services (Ugwuoke 2015). Even in rural areas where women constitute a larger share of agricultural producers, almost all extension agents are male (Ugwuoke 2015; UNDP and UN/DESA/DAW 2000; UNDP 1997).

With reference to land titles, the Igbo extraction of Southeastern Nigeria has customary law of inheritance where women do not own land nor take part in sharing of interest, but the Land Use Act permits them to purchase land on lease under Power of Attorney or Certificate of Occupancy. But majority of rural women lack control over or ownership of land, which remains in the hands of male folks.

AGRICULTURE, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

Many of the assumptions underlying the design of development schemes and projects have contributed to women doom of a typical modernization approach. Hence, according to Common Wealth Secretariat (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999) if women are considered in rural development programmes, it was more as adjuncts to their husbands or as daughters or mothers. Conventional development systems always assume that women’s position would improve as the economic prosperity of their husbands (Ugwuoke 2015). However, this assumption denies the unequal power relationship which exists between men and women and between both people of different races, castles and classes (Commonwealth Secretariat 1999; Ugwuoke 2015). Further, it took for granted the notions of male-breadwinner and female-housewife; ignoring both the fact that the numbers of female heads of household have
increased and it is women who provide a large part of the productive labour in small farms.

**AGRICULTURE, GENDER AND LITERACY**

Most communities in agriculture are predominantly uneducated with poor attitude to change. In most cases women are the least educated compared to the men and tend to suffer from lack of information (Ezeilo 2000; Ugwuoke 2015). Women’s low level of functional literacy, numeracy and related management skills limits both ability to manage status in the household and community. Few women apply for extension jobs because they lack the technical training and even when they are employed, cultural norms make them reluctant to be posted away from their husbands (Jiggins 2000 et al; Ugwuoke 2015). Small holder women farmers have difficulty in obtaining credit for the purchase of tools, equipments, raw materials, inputs, getting collateral, linking commodity to cash commodity; mostly based on illiteracy. Hence, the authors lament that the main issue is culture and society constraint in advancing formal and non-formal extension training.

**AGRICULTURE, GENDER AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND POLICIES**

When extension staff plans to work in a particular area, the time set in most cases is not convenient for women (World Bank, 2000). Hence, you end up having only men attending certain meetings and messages may not reach the women who actually may be the right target (Greig, 2000). In FAO (FAO 2007.) it was revealed that women do not benefit from all the support and related services provided to rural population to improve their skills, working conditions and productivity. Their participation in agricultural training and extension is highly limited, since the timing of extension sessions is often incompatible with women’s total workload (domestic and agricultural tasks). In addition, extension staff is still predominantly male which generally limits communities for cultural reasons. Female extension agents generally work in offices and often deal with traditional home economics matters, embroidery and carpet making (Ugwuoke 2015). However, available evidence (FAO 1995b) indicates that these services have been predominantly staffed by men. Only 15% of extension workers are women (FAO 1995a). These male extension workers tend to direct their services to male farmers or head of households (the men), thereby discriminating against female members of male headed households (Ugwuoke 2015; World Bank 2000).

**AGRICULTURE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, GENDER AND POVERTY REDUCTION**

Poverty reduction in absolute and relative terms has been the main focus of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG, formerly known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDG 3 was targeted on promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment (World Bank, 2000). As a critical strategy for poverty reduction, the increasing concern about the high incidence and gender dimension of poverty in Nigeria has been highlighted, and the fact that gender concern as global issue, has not received the attention that is deserves; in the past programmes and policies of Nigeria. The current efforts of development partner’s, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and other notable organizations was to check this ugly trend. They seek gender entrenchment within the ambit of sectoral plans and policies of Nigeria economic reforms. It is expected a gender responsive policy, plans and programmes that promote gender equality and equity where men and women enjoy equal quality of life (Ugwuoke 2015).

Although, some authors (Ugwuoke 2015) feel the efforts of Women in Agriculture (WIA) and Rural Development Department have yielded modest results in raising the socio-economic wellbeing of the rural women, there are still rooms for their improvement using interventions that are targeted towards gender equality (Ugwuoke 2015).
AGRICULTURE, GENDER AND MAINSTREAM ECONOMY

Women have been awarded the mainstay of farm production (both crops and livestock) and Nigerian economy (Ugwuoke 2015). They are singly responsible for certain output (mainly small animals, poultry) and production during certain seasons of the year. Nevertheless, according to the worker, they face significant barriers in accessing key services that improve productivity of their operations and income of households (FAO 1995 a & b; Ugwuoke 2015). These workers also lament that the programmes or services provided to farmers such as extension, credit, do not take into account the different needs, priorities and situations of women farmers in relation to men. They accused policy makers in agriculture and food safety of rarely considering how new policies and programmes may impact male and female farmers, particularly on families where women are defector official head of the household. Hence, Ugwuoke (Ugwuoke 2015) argues that only the era of sustainability and equitable development have brought to the forefront considerations for participatory democracy and gender equality. Hence, individual countries and development partners have endorsed the protocol for integrating gender sensitivity into development programmes. Ugwuoke (Ugwuoke 2015) even warns Southeastern Nigeria government to comply as they are major culprits in the disparity in Nigeria.

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICES DELIVERY

Integrated rural development projects implemented during the 1970s and 1980s did not satisfy the expectations of the stakeholders (Ugwuoke 2015). Among several reasons put forward to explain that was zero effective involvement of the beneficiaries in the development process. Many specialists agree that the success of any sustainable programme is linked to the real participation of the actors of a system (FAO 2007; Greig 2000 et al.; Jiggins 2000 et al; UN 2001). This will enhance farmers participation at the different levels of the development process (Ugwuoke 2015). The participation of men and women in agriculture is often perceived as a way of increasing their chance of success especially for the resolution of the problems of the poorest strata (Ugwuoke 2015). It keeps up the communities because the actors who are the researchers, the farmers and extension agents are at the forefront of the struggle. This partnership is characterized by a mutual confidence that creates a social environment favorable to the generation of effective, sustainable and large impact results (Schalkwyk 1996). In many developing countries like Nigeria, efforts are on to make the national extension systems more participatory. According to FAO (FAO 1973) this is vital for gender strategy where opportunities are provided for men and women farmers in project areas. Similarly, the World Bank (World Bank 2003) supports participatory extension that is demand driven and accountable to farmers. Since this ensures relevant and responsive services that meet the real needs of the beneficiaries. The FAO (FAO 1999) advocated gender participation in extension service delivery as vital for technological advancement, income enhancement and more equitable extension services.

Other workers like Ezeilo (Ezeilo 2000) enumerated the significant shortcomings of participatory extension services namely: unresponsiveness to the variation in farmer needs, lack of ownership by the intended beneficiaries; failure to reach poor women farmers, limitations in the quality of field and technical staff and high and unsustainable public costs. This worker is of the strong belief that extension driven to meet the diverse needs of modern farming is the key. All geared towards fundamental change of approach on educating and enabling men and women farmers to define and solve their own problems and to determine and take responsibilities for the extension services which they require.

CONCLUSIONS

In developed world like the United States that invented cooperative extension services the gender disparity may not be an issue; but it is serious issues in developing countries like Nigeria. Most of the affirmative 30% women in socio-economic-political life are still in principle rather than practice. The same scenario applies to agriculture where women basically form over 90% of the workforce in planting, weeding, harvesting, processing, storage and marketing; yet are marginal groups when it comes to access to basic literacy, agricultural inputs, credit facilities, insurance. They are also highly loaded with domestic work like baby making, baby housekeeping, house chores like cooking, washing, sanitation, husbanding, and attending to domestic needs of immediate and nuclei families. More than 90% of house-helps in all nook and crannies of Nigeria are women. Due to culture and tradition, most of them are not expected to come out during the daytime or exclusively permitted to crawl out at night or to do so both at day and
night fully covered from head to and sometimes never to mingle themselves with men as in Northern, Nigeria or never to talk or come publicly to air their opinion like in eastern Nigeria. In some areas women are treated like commodities or private good like in eastern Nigeria. In some cases the men use ruler and cups to measure the tubers of yam cut-off or given to their wives and children to check the cases of their wives or children coming to pilfer the commodity. In terms of agricultural extension services, this is purely exclusive to some few elites, or their men counterpart that can bribe their way through to the government officials, who invariably convert agricultural inputs or subsidies meant for the farmers to their private purse. Most agricultural extension services or programmes especially in southeastern Nigeria is more of “show and tell”; with more seriousness in western and northern Nigeria where FADAMA and irrigation programmes coupled with farm mechanization has turned farmers around. Anyway, to their domineering male counterpart. In eastern Nigeria where people believe more in survival of the fittest akin for capitalist economies typical of the Igbo’s. To them, agricultural extension services is meant for tribes that previously depended on hoe for survival like Abakaliki Kingdom; while the Onitsa-Nnewi-Awka Kingdom believe only on money, import and export, back warding and forwarding and loaded ships in high seas coming from China, Taiwan, Germany, Japan, UK, USA and other first world countries. To eastern Nigerians, agricultural extension services are for “tie-in-the neck”, hungry, angry, poor, dejected, rejected and ever protesting and murmuring civil servants that depend on less than one dollar a day for survival of family of ten people, including the hungry and angry wives we are addressing in this paper. Most often, agricultural extension services meetings and demonstration farms or pilot projects, turn to be battle fields where hungry, angry, tired, hopeless, intimidated, helpless, abandoned, rejected, accursed village farmers and jangroving World Bank-Federal Government-State Supported vehicle/bike extension staff square off their grievances. The worst tale is that all ADPs in eastern Nigeria in particular are now “Ghost Places” as World Bank, Federal and State Government have stopped their entire counterpart funding and pulled off from the programme. In most states, the government and stakeholders are now dancing to the tunes of their new found brides – FADAMA III and IV Programme; Sustainable Development Goals (formerly known as Millennium Development Goals, Community Development Agency; SURE-P (Nigeria fuel subsidy re-investment programme), NEWMAP (Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management Programme) and others too numerous to mention where foreign partners including World Bank, Federal and State Government are still interested in matching grants. These are subject to collapse when the World Bank stops their counterpart funding. The so called “value chain in agriculture” is highly political as you cannot add value to what has not been produced in the first instance. When farmers are clamoring for improved seeds/seedlings, fertilizers, pesticides, farm machines, processors, good roads to lift agricultural produce to markets; the politicians are busy using “value chain” to add value and money to their pockets. In a battle where the women being advocated for in this paper are insects and political stakeholders are elephants; the women has already disappeared from the face of the earth before the elephants lift their legs.

To worsen the scenario, the academics are no more academics. They are everywhere. Both in academics, agriculture, politics, business, importers, exporters, traders, hawkers, name it. The citadels of learning are no more gateways to excellence as other Universities in the world, including all the Land Grant Universities, like University of California that have championed Cooperative Extension for the past 102 years in the United States of America; that is leading in agricultural and food nation in the world. To continue to feed lazy, hungry and angry world is never in my dictionary. There should be no food for a lazy man. In the midst of economic and social woes of developing countries like Nigeria, it is my position that we must never succumb to food aid, food stamp, hunger and starvation in the name of lack of government support or subsidies or extension services. Everyone is gifted, including women in Nigeria, by virtue of the fact that the land tenure system; supports freehold and community ownership of land. There is no citizen of Nigeria that don’t have access to free land through husbands, children or both, and for anyone to wake up daily and gossip about failing economy and government, without helping
himself or herself; in the empty and fertile farms; is like an armed robber sleeping at day time, waiting for night time to come. To the armed robbers, they even suffer to get their money, unlike the lazy and idle farmers, who want manna to fall from heaven. Any citizen of Nigeria who dies from hunger and starvation demands no clemency, except if it is due to natural calamities like erosion, landslides, flooding, pests and diseases and others that are beyond their control and capacity to handle. The country has over 170 million people, which shows there is no lack of manpower to till the soil, and we have over 599,000 square kilometers of fertile arable land. Nevertheless, Nigeria agricultural extension services have not failed Nigeria women. Neither has it failed the men. The onus lies on Nigeria and Nigerians colonial mentality. Any nation that does not shift from slavery and colonial mentality like China and India, and take their destiny in their hands, can never be a great nation. We cannot expect World Bank, Food and Agricultural Organization, United Nations Development Programme and other International, and National Stakeholders to continue to spoon-feed us like a baby for eternity in the a land flowing with milk and honey. Natural resources of immense magnitude everywhere, and we are busy chasing rats. A man who chases rats when his house is on fire is an insane man. Nigeria and Nigerians like erosion, landslides, flooding, pests and diseases and others that are beyond their control and capacity to handle. The country has over 170 million people, which shows there is no lack of manpower to till the soil, and we have over 599,000 square kilometers of fertile arable land. Nevertheless, Nigeria agricultural extension services have not failed Nigeria women. Neither has it failed the men. The onus lies on Nigeria and Nigerians colonial mentality. Any nation that does not shift from slavery and colonial mentality like China and India, and take their destiny in their hands, can never be a great nation. We cannot expect World Bank, Food and Agricultural Organization, United Nations Development Programme and other International, and National Stakeholders to continue to spoon-feed us like a baby for eternity in the a land flowing with milk and honey. Natural resources of immense magnitude everywhere, and we are busy chasing rats. A man who chases rats when his house is on fire is an insane man. Nigeria and Nigerians (women, men, and children) cannot afford to be insane at over 55 years of independence.

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