GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT
The paper introduces key concepts of gender perspective. It describes the potential role that women play in agriculture, and points out the barriers to women’s representation and participation in agricultural production that need to be overcome in the current Nigeria agricultural transformation agenda. The paper further examines the importance of gender mainstreaming in rural development agenda. The paper therefore recommended the need for integration of gender concerns in rural development programmes. This will not only lead to increase in productivity but also, will create equal opportunity for the targeted groups to participate in poverty reduction, food security, employment generation, and wealth creation through value chain. This will promote the policy trust of the Nigeria agricultural transformation agenda.

Keywords: Gender mainstreaming, Agricultural production, Agricultural transformation

INTRODUCTION
At the center of global debates, agricultural production is recognized as a fundamental driver of economic growth and poverty reduction for many developing countries Nigeria inclusive. It is a priority area of investment, thus, the agricultural transformation agenda recognizes it as a business. The roles of both women and men should be carefully analyzed in development agenda. This will enhance sustainability in agricultural development programmes. A characteristic of the revitalization of the agriculture sector has been the recognition that past efforts have failed in part because they overlooked women’s role in the sector and the role of gender inequalities in reducing agricultural productivity. The state of food and agriculture, women comprise, on average, 43 percent of the agricultural labor force in developing countries, ranging from 20 percent in Latin America to 50 percent in Eastern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Food and Agricultural Organization, 2011). The report argues that reducing gender inequalities in access to productive resources and services could produce an increase in yields on women’s farms of between 20 percent and 30 percent, which could raise agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 percent to 4 percent (FAO, 2011). This implies that an urgent step should be taken by agricultural experts and other service providers to promote gender equality in any development agenda such as the Nigeria agricultural transformation agenda. Specifically, the objectives of this paper were to describe some of the key concepts of gender, the potential roles women play in agricultural production vis-à-vis constrains experienced, and to examine the importance of gender mainstreaming in the Nigeria agricultural transformation agenda.

LITERATURE
The paper relied on available related literature. The authors achieved this by consulting on-line materials, journals, and book of proceedings on gender issues in development agenda.

Key concepts of gender
While sex refers to the biological differences between females and males and which are
universal, gender refers to social attributes and opportunities associated with being a female or a male and the relationships between women and men, girls and boys. These attributes, relationships and opportunities are socially constructed and learned in a socialization process. They vary across time and space, between societies and cultures. They are therefore context-specific and can be modified (Rubin, et al 2009).

Gender roles

Gender roles are what a society or culture constructs and prescribes as proper roles, behaviour and personal identities for women and men. Gender roles and characteristics affect power relations between women and men at all level and can result in inequality in opportunities and outcomes for some groups. Gender roles often associate women with femininity and men with masculinity, with the later given higher value (United Nation, 2010).

Gender equality

Gender equality does not mean that women and men are or should become the same, but it does mean that women and men should have equal rights and equal opportunities in all spheres of life. It is based on women and men being equal partners in their home, their community and their society. In the context of local economic development, it means that participation in governance, and access to decent employment opportunities and conditions of work, to resources, and to services, are not negatively influenced by the fact that one is male or female (United Nation, 2010).

Gender budgeting

Budgets are an effective tool for promoting gender equality. Rather than having a specific provision in the budget of local authorities for programmes targeting women and girls, gender budgeting implies that in drawing up the whole budget, resources are allocated on the basis of the analysis done of the practical needs and strategic interests of women and men and the demands expressed by their representatives. It involves therefore an analysis of the entire budget in terms of its benefits for women and men.

Questions that can be used to assess if the budget of an initiative is gender-responsive includes;

- has an analysis been made on the impact that the budget allocation will have for men and women?
- does the budget explicitly allocate resources to gender-related work, if this is deemed necessary? (E.g. gender training, ad-hoc or continuous gender expertise; missions for gender specialists, etc.);
- does it identify and put in place any mechanism for reporting purposes that monitors the resources allocated and spent on gender equality goals? (United Nation, 2010)

Gender analysis

This refers to the systematic gathering and analysis of information on gender differences and social relations to identify and understand the different roles, divisions of labor, resources, constraints, needs, opportunities, and interests of various groups including men and women, girls and boys, and transgendered persons in a given context. Data can be collated using quantitative and qualitative methods. A gender analysis will first describe existing gender relations in a particular context, ranging from households to firms, producer groups, and policy-making institutions. It aims to clarify how gender roles and relations create opportunities for or obstacles to achieving development objectives (ILO, 2010).

Gender integration

This is the process of using evidence to make informed decisions on how to address gender equality and female empowerment systematically across programme initiatives, ongoing programs

**Potential roles of women in agricultural production vis-à-vis constrains experienced**

In recognition of the role women play in agricultural production, Rahman (2008) observed that women in Nigeria form an active and reserve labour force but they rarely own the means of productions. However, the position of women in meeting challenges of agricultural development cannot be over emphasized. Women make a significant contribution to food production; they provide 60-80% of agricultural labour and are responsible for 80% of food production (Rahman, 2008). Shamsodini et al (2011) stated that women are almost entirely responsible for virtually all activities like hoeing, weeding, harvesting, transporting, storing, processing, marketing and domestic chores which provides them with additional income-earning opportunity and enhances their ability to contribute to household food security. In line with the foregoing, it was reported that in Nigeria, 70% of the agricultural workers, 80% of food producers, and 10% of those who process basic foodstuffs are women and they also undertake 60 to 90% of the rural marketing; thus making up more than two-third of the workforce in agricultural production (FAO, 2006). Afolabi (2008) while writing on women as pillars of national economy in Nigeria, focused on the activities of rural women in Ondo State of Nigeria made a careful analytical study of women’s agricultural activities and discovered that they are very strong pillars of the economy in the State. He further observed that women in the State were organized into groups, and were engaged in more than one economic activity. Emerging from the study were the following facts:

- that rural women in the state are major contributors to food production;
- that these rural women have successfully managed human and economic resources to achieve optimum results;
- that they became employers of labour, thereby reducing unemployment; and
- that output from the farms of these rural women contributed to reduction in food shortage crisis.

By so doing, they contribute substantially to national agricultural output, maintenance of the environment and family food security (Brown, et al 2001).

Yet, the role of women in these activities, so important economically, has remained obscure for long because women seldom play any major roles in political activities or decision making processes. Although they contribute significantly to the welfare of households through involvement in reproductive as well as productive activities, they are constrained in several ways by social and culturally prescribed norms that, among other things, limit their mobility and participation in development activities. Although, in general, most of the poor farmers have limited access to services and inputs such as fertilizers and agrochemicals, women farmers, in particular, face additional constraints such as limited access to markets and credit services, limited voting power and participation in the development of new legislation (Rubin, et al 2009). Women are also confronted with the consequences of institutional “gender blindness”. For instance, rural women have little representation in, or access to, service bureaucracies.

**Importance of gender mainstreaming in agricultural production to enhancing the Nigeria ATA**

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy or process that aims to achieve gender equality. It means, on the one hand, that policies, programmes and
institutional structures are in place to redress existing inequalities and to preserve equality between women and men. On the other hand, it means that measures to address the specific needs and priorities of women and men, either separately or together are adopted. Mainstreaming of gender in any development agenda is not about adding a “woman’s component” or even a “gender equality component” into an existing activity. It goes beyond increasing women’s participation, it means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to bear in the development agenda. It may entail identifying the need for changes in that agenda. It may require changes in goals, strategies, and actions so that both women and men can influence, participate in, and benefit from development processes. The goal of mainstreaming gender equality is thus the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women (ILO, 2010). Gender mainstreaming is considered to be important because it is a means of examining the implications of gender differences for the success of all planned actions in agriculture and ensuring that they are taken into account in all aspects of any project, programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation so that resources are targeted to women for activities performed by women and to men for activities undertaken by men. As mentioned above the gender roles of men and women in different communities vary. Therefore to be able to alleviate rural poverty, promote household food security and increase productivity in the agricultural sector, which forms the policy thrust of initiating the ATA, a concerted effort is needed to gain accurate understanding of the situations and roles of women and men in agriculture in a given community. This will enable accurate targeting of technology, resources and information, increase the relevancy, efficiency and profitability of agriculture. If this is not done, we will continue to address the wrong audience and at wrong time which undermines agricultural development. In recognition of this therefore, the following specific areas are considered important in gender mainstreaming of development programme related to agricultural production such as the Nigeria ATA. They include (i) targeting (ii) monitoring and evaluation, (iii) sensitization, (iv) capacity building and empowerment, (v) group promotion, and (vi) policy dialogue (legislation).

1. **Target groups**
   According to Lawal and Issa (2013) genders are groups of men and women of different socio-economic categories. They further stated that they include among others; youths, male and female headed households, people living with disabilities, orphans headed households, widows/ widowers, the aged and ‘resource poor’ men and women. To ensure a sustainable and highly productivity agriculture, the interests and needs of these groups should be captured on equal basis and integrated into the stage of agricultural development efforts. The applicability of this dimension in the ATA will also create room for its sustainability.

2. **Monitoring and evaluation**
   Monitoring focuses mainly on inputs and activities and examines evidence relating to involvement of participants. Commenting on the importance of evaluation, Ayanwu (2000) stated that it provides the feedback required by those who fund programmes, planners, implementers and beneficiaries on the progress and success of the programme. A situation where the machineries for effective planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects of community development are lacking, the projects are likely to be abandoned without achieving set goals. The author sees evaluation as simply the determination of how well a job has
been done. According to him, this amounts to the process of guiding the worth or efficacy of what contributions has been made by all concerned in the agricultural programme. In line with the foregoing, Lawal and Issa (2013) quoting ASARECA (2011) stated that effective monitoring and evaluation of gender progress involves identifying the gender based results aimed for at the beginning of an intervention, developing gender sensitive indicators, collecting, and strategically using sex-aggregated qualitative and quantitative data.

3. Sensitization

This involves creating awareness about development programmes relating to agricultural transformation through consultation with ministries at all levels and with gender concerned groups. In trying to bring the programme to the fore, service providers and other policy makers should create enabling environment for both men and women to attend.

4. Capacity building and empowerment

The ability of any institution to respond to the needs of men and women farmers equitably is a function of its institutional structure and organizational culture. Examining the characteristics of capacity building and empowerment in relation to gender considers the extent to which the institution delivering services is equipped with the skills and resources (both financial and human) to reach both men and women farmers. This requires that extension agents have the capacity to identify and address the differing needs and preferences of men and women farmers, as well as to create the conditions for women to have equal opportunity to contribute to and shape the institutions responsible for agricultural transformation.

5. Group promotion

Mixed-sex groups: Women in mixed-sex groups are able to overcome their own resource limitations by tapping into men’s networks, resources, and information, which are often wider than women’s. Available literature from studies reveals that women’s participation in mixed-sex groups is associated with better decision making and improved resource management. Mixed-sex groups, however, often reproduce gendered patterns of behavior and resource distribution that limit women’s voice and leadership. On the other hand, single-sex groups can offer women more opportunities for empowerment and have been shown to build confidence and leadership skills among women in most agricultural development effort. Studies have shown that women expressed a preference for training with other women because men dominate discussion. Free of norms that influence how men and women interact with each other, women can work together to identify solutions to common constraints and develop leadership skills. Single-sex groups, however, risk reinforcing stereotypes about women (e.g., they are only interested in crops for home consumption) or inequalities in access to resources between men and women. Rather than assuming that mixed or single-sex groups are the more effective avenue for reaching women, a gender-equitable needs to be able to analyze current local conditions and allow for flexibility between and within these two strategies. Single-sex groups may be necessary in contexts with a high degree of gender segregation. Mixed-sex groups may be workable in other contexts. Mixed-sex groups can also be divided into smaller groups on the basis of gender or other social variables for specific activities as contained in the policy thrust of the programme.

6. Policy dialogue

To effectively secure a sustainable development programme in agricultural production, there is an urgent need for policy makers to legislate agricultural policy with special reference
to gender issues by mainstreaming such issues and incorporate them into laws at all levels of government. The integration of gender issues in agricultural transformation programme policy and legislation will ensure effective participation of all stakeholders in a stable policy environment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender mainstreaming is considered to be important because it is a means of examining the implications of gender differences for the success of all planned actions in agriculture and ensuring that they are taken into account in all aspects of any project or programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the purpose of this paper, the following recommendations were considered important. They included the following:

- Implementation of resources for development programmes should be targeted to women for activities performed by women and to men for activities undertaken by men.
- The integration of gender concerns in rural development programmes is also recommended. This will not only lead to increase in productivity but also, will create equal opportunity for the targeted groups to participate in poverty reduction and food security there by promoting the policy trust of the Nigeria agricultural transformation agenda.

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