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Gender Equality: Women in Agriculture or Gender in Agriculture



Chekene MB^{1*} and Kashim IU²

¹Department of Agricultural Technology, Federal Polytechnic Bali, Nigeria

²Department of Science Laboratory Technology, Federal Polytechnic Mubi, Nigeria

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***Corresponding author:** Chekene MB, Department of Agricultural Technology, Federal Polytechnic Bali, Nigeria

Abstract

Creating interest and excitement around gender study has become an important part of agricultural development. Women in agricultural extension has established in Nigeria to increase the voice and share of women in agricultural sector. Unfortunately this development resulted to gender bias. This paper, the authors review the evidence that is in public domain in relation to limitation of WIA in access to resources, cultural belief and tradition of the societies. It has been found that the women in agricultural approach resulted to gender bias and promotes gender inequality. Therefore, this approach should change with a policy that will promotes gender equality. Like Gender and Development (GAD) approaches. Policy makers and researchers should serve as tools in promoting gender and development approach and the implication of the program (WIA) that support gender bias are; it brings conflict, affect societies cultural belief and tradition and also will resulted to total rejection of the program in some areas which may cause a serious problem to agricultural development in the country.

Keywords: Women in agriculture; Gender and development; Gender equality

Abbreviations: GAD: Gender and Development; ADP: Agricultural Development Programme; WIA: Women in Agricultural Extension; ICWR: International Centre for Research on Women

Introduction

Gender equality has a strong anxiety to the world and their interest was to address differences between man and women in terms of needs and responsibilities. In their effort to achieve this in Nigeria, government established Women in Agricultural extension (WIA) programme by the federal ministry of agriculture and World Bank and put it under agricultural development programme (ADP) so that they will help women in accessing the agricultural information, resources and reduce gender discrepancy level [1]. This approach also called women in Agriculture (WIA). With this, Agricultural development programme is facing a serious challenges of gender inequality and their main problem is poor understanding of what gender means. Gender is a principal organiser and controller of activities between people in Agricultural production, reproduction, distribution and consumption [2]. It also means roles and responsibilities and it depends on the cultural belief of the society giving to man and woman. Inability to understand gender may result to gender blindness and increases gender differences. Good Understanding of Gender will help programme planners and policy makers in agricultural development to achieve their objectives. Gender did not mean men or women rather how they associate. Gender is a social practice, idea and attributes giving to male or female [3].

Gender analysis

The gender analysis is a systematic way of gathering facts on gender inequality and its relationship with the aim of understanding and redresses the differences [4]. Gender study is to examine the interaction between men and women's role, right and responsibility as they have differences in their performance such as knowledge, needs, want, talent and experience [5]. In agricultural system, Gender analysis gives an in-depth knowledge on how to characterise the roles and responsibilities between men and women in production and processing [6]. Gender study may analyse the role and responsibility and find the best role for man or woman. For instance, women are characterising more peaceful and honest than men [7]. However, giving more emphasis on women desirable character may result to gender bias [8]. Gender analysis is associated with many factors such as class, age, sex, race, culture, belief, region, and political interest [9,10]. The objective of this work was to review the Women in Agriculture (WIAE) and suggest the best way for policy makers, project planners and programme leaders.

Women role in agricultural development

The contribution of women to agricultural development will not be overemphasis. Women provide 60-80% of food and more

than half of the global foods are supply by the women [11]. Women spend 85-90% of labour force on household food processing and preparation [12]. Time allocation study found that women labour is highly significant than man [13]. Moreover, girls do more work in household than boys [14]. Again 60- 90% of total farm work is done by women [15]. These covered wide range of activities such as land clearing, tilling, weeding, planting, and application of fertilizer, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, milling, transporting and marketing among others. Despite these facts, agricultural and economic policies give less priority to female [16]. In Africa if gender equality been adopted properly it may result to (20%-30%) increase in yield output and 2.5-4.0% increase in global yield and this will alleviate global hunger by 12-17% [17].

In Nigeria, women have done a lot to agricultural development. They contribute up to 90% of agricultural workload [18,19]. Women provide 80% labour in agricultural marketing and processing activities and up to 70% of small scale agro-business [20]. Despite roles play women have been neglected in decision making and agricultural policies [21]. The roles of women have been stagnated by lack of extension information [22]. These are among the reasons why Nigeria government initiated women in agricultural extension programme (WIA) so as to increase the voice of women in agricultural sector [23]. In the other hand, women in agriculture approach considered only women and its effort was to increase the level of women participation in decision making and natural resource management (Gender and Agriculture n.d). This approach will stagnate gender issue because it concentrates on women [24]. Meanwhile, we cannot separate women from men in agricultural activities. Women work together with men in division of labour. For example, men perform hard work (cutting trees, making ridges) while women involved in planting of seed, harvest, transporting goods, processing and marketing [25]. Women and men together give an important contribution to agricultural development [26]. Considering only women may lead to gender bias. Any gender inequality in resource and economic opportunities will increases the level of poverty [27]. The WIA approach does not consider multiple roles of men in women empowerment [5]. This attracts new challenges to gender equality. In addition, women in agricultural extension (WIA) programme has shortage of women extension staff this resulted to difficulty in accessing their clientele and most of the staff of WIA are not an agricultural extension expert and also, they lack ADP supports do to their gender bias [3].

Access to resources and WIA

The land is one of the most important resources in agricultural development while WIA programme did not consider land as a problem in which land access is a major problem to women in an agricultural society as women need basic resources for agriculture [19]. Women were experiencing difficulty in accessing land in Nigeria [28]. In the study of Socio-economic factors influencing rice production among male and female farmers in Nigeria found that accessing land is difficult to women in rice production [29]. again in the study of determining technical efficiency of NERICA rice production, the gender approach found that women have

difficulty in accessing the resource than men, more especially credit and land [30]. Women are accessing land through their men in most part of Nigeria and in accessing credit land may serve as a good collateral and women lack land for collateral [31]. Further more women in developing countries were experiencing a problem in accessing land. For example, Santal women in Indian perceived owning land is a taboo, to the extent that women do not inherit land due to respect to their cultural belief and women embrace this culture so as to retain their identity as a good women "Good women do not inherit land" Book title [32]. However, methods of acquiring land are diverse between man and woman [Doss *et al.*, 2011]. In Uganda majority of women engage in joint ownership of land with their husbands but only few of them have the formal document of their land and even within those that have the formal document very few were women with less control over the land [33].

Cultural belief

The WIA approach did not consider the culture and belief of society in a wider context. Cultural attached and belief of some part of Nigeria may not tolerate the programme that comes with woman's agenda. Culture and traditional belief and family resistance were the major problems of woman's farmers [34]. Taboo is related to agricultural activities (from cropping to animal rearing), religion and culture has strong attached to agricultural production system [28]. Religion and cultural value affect woman that does not belong to any group in accessing agricultural information [31]. Even a nation with the same belief they live and understand things differently. For instance, in Afghanistan Sunni women are more restricted than Shi'as women [35]. Meanwhile, this situation is commonly happening in Nigeria whereby northern women are more restricted than the women in the southern part of the country.

Gender and development approach (GAD)

The gender and development (GAD) give emphasis on both men and women and how they interact to one another [36]. This will reduce gender inequality, promote gender equality, power relation and brings solution to developmental problems [37]. This approach (GAD) considered gender at the centre focal point of development and its gender related approach [38]. This approach addresses women that experience restrictions in accessing resources, empowerment and participation through equal treatment given to all [39]. Gender and development consider both men and women address inequalities that prevent development, and this commitment will be sustainable for future [5]. Holistic approach of GAD has impact on developmental agenda in many sectors [36,40-44]. Therefore, Agricultural production system may find it difficult to separate woman from man [45-51].

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, gender and development (GAD) approach is more compactable and respectful to people's culture, belief, norms, value and it's socially related approach as it considers who deserves the roles and responsibilities among peoples in an

agricultural system. The gender and development approach is more important in addressing gender related issue than women in agricultural approaches as it redress the developmental issues between man and women this will stabilise the relationship in decision making, access to resources, division of labour and respect to people's belief and tradition while Women in agriculture (WIA) consider only women in their programme and this may promote gender bias. The study recommended that:

- A. The project planners and researchers should consider the gender equality in resource access such as land, agricultural input and advisory services.
- B. The government/private sector should promote gender and development approaches as they can't separate man-woman in agricultural system.

The policy makers should consider gender and development that respects belief, culture and tradition in their programme.

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