

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH DEVELOPMENT: COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

The present paper is a review on the position of women empowerment program in combating violence against women and girls (VAWGs) in Nigeria. Violence against women and girls or better still Gender Based Violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act committed against women and girls will. The violence against women and girls refers to as gender-based due to the fact that it is socially ascribed as a result of gender differences arising from gender inequalities between male and female. VAWGs today are considered to be a serious development challenges, human right and health issue affecting the wellbeing of women and girls not only in Nigeria but also in developed countries. VAWGs denote to be an act of harmful discrimination against the weaker sex as a result of weak social norms and uneven power distribution. This paper is a review based on national demographic health survey 2013. However, development as defined to be an ability towards improving the wellbeing of the vast majority, women inclusive, women empowerment also entails the ability of allowing women to benefit from development process where women will be allowed access to healthcare and safety, education, human right and political participation. The present paper is an attempt to understand the guidelines, principles or approaches to development, women empowerment in Nigeria. VAWGs social and ecological model of analysis as well as prevention and response to VAWGs in Nigeria are also discussed in the paper. It is recommended that the development should integrate women empowerment in Nigeria to combat VAWGs.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Development and Combating Violence

1.Introduction

Violence against women and girls (VAWGs) is most starkly brought home in the phenomenon of gender inequality. The VAWGs results about 6 million death every year out of these 23 percent death before life birth, and 10 percent are death in early childhood, 21 percent death during their reproduction age, and 38 percent death at the age^[1]. For every death, there are more women who have no access to education, a job to better their life, or a political responsibility that will make them realise their full potentials which they would have achieve if they are men^[2]. However, relative violation of women's right, and the extent to which they are discriminated have improved over the last two decades, apparently in a number of spheres, in low- and moderate-income countries, the access and enrolment rate for girls in schools was 34 percent in 2010 while that boys was 41 percent. Development experts tend to take into consideration gender inequality in job market and the gender pay gap as they affect society as affect society's development^[3]. Thus, integrating development and women empowerment call for equal participation by both gender in economic decision making. Hence, development refers to an instrument for women's health, safety, and wellbeing. This is in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda of promoting gender equality through fighting women's poverty, access to education, maternal mortality and empowerment opportunity for women and girls^[4]. In the same vein, UNICEF in collaboration with USAIDs and other development partners proposed number of initiatives in order to combat violence against women and girls (VAWGs) in low- and middle-income countries. Women empowerment programme were initiated to strengthen cultural, racial and gender discrimination in workplace^[5]. Empowering women through development initiative includes programme of addressing the needs of VAWGs survivors, prevention and advocacy at all levels which are aimed at combating VAWGs. Women empowerment through development signify that in any nation where women were less discriminated under the law, great development

is noticeable in that development closed the gender ^[6]. Therefore, women empowerment through development increases working class women ^[7]. However, women and girls are faced with fear of harassment and other forms violence limit their participation in activities outside the home. Thus, women experience violence in the workplace, perhaps the need to integrate development and women empowerment as approach to combat violence against women and girls ^[8]. Studies revealed that VAWGs has economic consequences which includes provision of services to Survivors, affecting the income of the victim families, decreases productivity and negatively affects human capital development of the society which are surely burden to developing economic like Nigeria. For example, in recent World Bank report VAWGs was estimated to cost about 1.2 to 3.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which most countries Nigeria inclusive spent on education ^[9]. Therefore, it is based on this background, this paper tends to examine the place of women empowerment through development in combating VAWGs in Nigeria. The paper intends to examine the relationship between women empowerment through development to combat VAWGs in Nigeria. Thus, the present paper is an attempt to understand the impact of programs on women empowerment to fight against violence against women and girls in Nigeria using the Social and ecological model of analysis.

2. Methodology

This paper as a review work is grounded on comprehensive review of previous studies on VAWGs in Nigeria. Nigeria is determined to fight VAWGs using Women empowerment through development. The information gleaned from work of other researches and surveys carried out in Nigeria cover the major part of this paper. Thus, the secondary source of data were collected from Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey 2013 by NPC and ICF International 2014; the Nigerian Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey 2016-2017 by UNICEF 2018; and the 2014 Violence Against Children Survey by UNICEF,2014. However, the paper as analytic review depend solely on secondary source of information/data.

3. An Overview of VAWGs, Women Empowerment and Development

VAWGs today emerged as development challenges affecting health and right of women. By definition, VAWGs refers to an act of violence perpetrated against women as a result of gender inequality, imbalance power distribution and weak social norms. Making VAWGs a worldwide phenomenon that transcend the bound geography, culture, race, religion, touching virtually every community. The impunity of VAWGs is perhaps, reinforced by customs and institutions. However, VAWGs often constitutes the global unpunished crime, it usually appears to be one major cause of death and incapacity among women and girls of reproductive age as cancer. Therefore, it is associated with maternal and child health problem that causes ill health to women and girls compare to road traffic accident and malaria put together ^[10]. Perhaps, the VAWGs is today constitute one of the most oppressive form of gender inequality, posing serious barrier to the economic, political and social equality, thereby depriving women and girls from equal participation ^[11]. According to World Bank inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Gender-Based Violence (GBV) constitutes any act committed against a person will based on social or biological differences ^[9]. This act of violence against women and girls as the vulnerable is directly reflected and reinforced by the existing gender inequalities, thus countries and organizations like UN women, put in place measures to reduce the prevalence violence survivors. Similarly it is described Gender-Based Violence (GBV) with particular reference to VAWGs as an act that results to physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls. These acts include coercion or arbitrary deprivation of right, whether occurring in private of public domain ^[8]. Therefore, VAWGs are terms used to explain any act of violence against the opposite ^[12]. In addition, GBV or VAWGs are impediments to gender equality and a barrier to achievement to range of development and women empowerment. However, VAWGs precludes women and girls from contributing to or benefiting from development thereby limiting their choice and ability to act ^[13]. Moreover, the GBV or VAWGs as acts such as; Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Non-Partner Sexual Assault (NPSA), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), Female Infanticide (FI), Child Marriage (CM) and Survival Sex (SS) among others ^[12]. VAWGs are therefore act of deprivation of women and girl's liberty resulting from violence. As such these acts has become the central concerned to governments and societies at large as they hider human right of the women and girls and as well as epidemic which causes negative impact on development of Nigeria thereby causing more damage to women empowerment. The VAWGs are also associated with multiple adverse physical and psychological health effects such as severe injuries and pains, abdominal illness and even gynaecological or sexual reproductive health problems such as STDs or HIV/AIDs; and others includes depression, abuse of drugs ^[14].

4. VAWGs, Development, and Women Empowerment

It is commonly argued that women need economic independence just to escape from condition that will subject them to violence situation. Where women were financially stable, own asset, they can control their own resources to improve their living condition, they ought to have more economic power, which they can use to protect them against in their homes and in the community. Most women experienced violence at work place,

market or public domain and as well as they move around. The fear of harassment or sexual assault characterised the experienced many women. However, women who gain income and economic power may also find they subject to increased violence from their husbands, families or other community members due to male dominated nature of society and weak social norms. The societal norms is a complex one. Therefore, the relationship between development, women empowerment and VAWGs is also a complex one. Perhaps, approaches to women empowerment approaches to VAWGS is a better place to explain ^[7].

5.Approaches to Development, Women Empowerment and VAWGs

Approaches to women empowerment and development were based on the following guideline, ideas, questions, principles and thoughts:

1. What are the needs and constraint of women, particularly those women who are more vulnerable;
2. Approaches must consider young adolescent girls who are the building block for women empowerment. Provide financial literacy to young girls, serving and business skills rather than mere economic activity. That provides them with economic activity necessary for survival and increase access to education not increase vulnerability such as debt;
3. Approaches must include child, girls and women protection laws and actions; for example, work for girls less than 18 years. This includes link with child protection architecture in collaboration with child protection experts, government and civil society organization (CSO) to monitor child protection policies;
4. Access to education for girl child women should be included, approaches should be based on providing life skills training particularly training in all interventions targeted at adolescent girls, attendance and continuation as well as starting education;
5. Approaches must equip women and girls with technical skills which are demand of labour market;
6. Approaches must endeavour to help women and girls expand their networks and link to employment opportunities at the appropriate time frame;
7. Approaches must integrate all no harm aspects after analysis of whether interventions are increasing or decreasing the vulnerability or risk to women and girls;
8. Approaches must ensure safe, secured and considerate in transforming girls out of adolescent program and into the world of work; and,
9. Approaches must remain sensitive to violence context by considering girls associated with armed groups and forces or girls who insecure in environments such as high crime areas particularly where weapons are prolific ^[7].

6. Guideline for Combating VAWGs through Development

Based on the above approaches the following factors are important in combating VAWGs through women empowerment and development:

1. Women empowerment programmes based on new and innovative approaches which will allow women have sense of ownership, control and access to asset;
2. Women empowerment programme based on strategic vision to girls and women who are committed to get economic asset;
3. Strategic vision based on the need for effective link up action across pillars;
4. Women empowerment programmes based on need to support enabling environment that will challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.
5. Women empowerment based on increase value and given women and girls ability to build effective legislation that will protect their rights;
6. Women empowerment based on the need to increase the power of women to make informed choice and control decision towards what affect them the most;
7. Women empowerment based on shared prosperity and poverty reduction;
8. Women empowerment programmes based on inclusive growth that importantly address structural barrier. For example, new development act and women empowerment programmes which are committed to end VAWGs^[5].

7.VAWGs: Social and Ecological Model of Analysis

VAWGS is a multifaceted phenomenon. In order words, this to say that multiple factors come to play in promoting VAWGs in Nigeria. Perhaps, these factors include at individual, relationship, community and societal level. Although, the social ecological model widely acknowledged above as causes of VAWGs but in some instances, gender inequality is considered to be the root cause of VAWGS. Hence, the societal level factors include unequal power distribution and resources between male and female. According to this model VAWGs factors include:

1. Societal-Level Factors: factor such as distribution of power and resources between male and female; according to this model, gender discrimination and inequality which are expressed through different mechanisms. For example, discriminatory laws, unequal access to political and economic power, socially constructed norms of masculinity and femininity, gender role and stereotype^[15].
2. Individual and Relationship Level Factors: VAWGs root causes according to this model are increased the probability that a woman and girl will experience violence. However, factors such as age, educational level, alcohol or drug use, poverty, acceptance of violence, unemployment and depression among many others. Social ecological model as then basis of analysis.
3. VAWGs in Nigeria prevalence can be described in relation to legislation and policy level framework associated with VAWGs as well the model analyses the implementation of VAWGs laws at national and subnational levels. The model also provides a details analysis of specific norms that increase acceptance for or at least a lack of condemnation of VAWGs at the community level.
4. In addition to the above, field research outline in-depth some interpersonal and individual drivers of various forms of VAWGs.

8. VAWGs Prevention and Response in Nigeria

In Nigeria like in other part of the world, VAWGs remained a major constraint to development and, therefore, economic opportunity and underdevelopment affair to be significant challenge to women empowerment and opportunities. 28 percent of women in Nigeria aged 15-49 have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence, 11 percent of the women who had experienced violence never, sought help or told anyone about the crime^[16,17]. However, harmful practice of child marriage and female genital mutilation are also prevalent across Nigeria as women trafficking and children. Added to this, the armed conflict in Nigerian North East geographical zone has further contributed to a steep increase, targeting women and children. Women are increasingly being used as instruments of war. For instance, as suicide bombers or through forced marriage which also make women more vulnerable to stigmatization and rejection by their immediate families and communities. However, the World Bank and Nigerian Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development initiated the Nigerian For Women Project (NFWP) to improve the livelihood of women in Nigeria, Hence, the project comprised the followings as its components:

- Building Social Capital: This seeks to build social capital by encouraging Nigerian women to become members of Women's Affinity Groups (WAGs) and to strengthen new and existing groups to serve as institutional platforms for Nigeria women. Other components of the building social capital include: Influencing Social Norms, Creating and Strengthening WAGs and Livelihoods Program. This component supports economically active women in WAGs thereby empowering them by providing livelihood grants and skills training;
- Innovative and Partnership: the aimed of this component is to use Nigeria's talent pool to identify and deploy innovation that can change the social condition of women and improve project delivery, monitoring and evaluation. Uplifting the socioeconomic status of women through advancing policy dialogue, strengthening technical and implementation capacities^[11].

Therefore, the linkage between women empowerment and VAWGs risk reduction required that to combat VAWGs empowering women to become economically independent mitigate VAWGs.

9. Combating VAWGs in Nigeria

A number of factors fuel VAWGs, perhaps in communities where male dominance is normal routine, there is often a direct connection to harmful and conservative gender norms that asset control over women and gender diverse people render women to more vulnerable to violence. Research suggests that certain cultural gender related norms, such as widespread acceptance of wife-beating or prioritized access to financial resources for men, are predictive of VAWGs^[8]. Therefore, in order to combat VAWGs and build strong respond when it occurs in Nigeria, the following points are important:

- Target harmful gender norms and educate young people through expanded effort or comprehensive sexuality education and behavior change initiatives;
- Community-based program that will engage young people to understand prevention of violence and promotion of gender equality;
- Ensure and enforce legal protection and justice for VWAGs survivors with improve multi-sectoral services to support VAWGs survivor;
- Increase equitable access to economic asset; and,
- Invest in local women's movement and women led civil society^[19].

To combat VAWGs in Nigeria especially in emergency situation require that collaboration and focus should be solely on multisectoral response to include primary prevention activities^[20, 21, 22, 23]. Thus, primary prevention

program includes transforming conditions that support VAWGs, promoting positive behaviors and development of skills that will serve as model to others and adoption of new norms and behaviors that will prevent VAWGs^[24]. Although, communities have shared norms values which sometimes can send a message against VAWGs. These norms are expectations on how a women, men and girls should behave and value spelt out who should have power and control over certain behaviors, how families and communities value women and girls; values should support women and girls' rights and opportunities. Hence, local institutions and social service providers such as health care, education and justice services are responsible for reinforcement against harmful norms. For instance, denying that sexual harassment and VAWGs exist in the community, blaming women and girls for sexual assault when they seek care and negative attitudes of police and the legal system. Refusing to held husbands accountable for abusing their wives. In Nigeria, there are often resources and programs available especially in areas that requiring humanitarian support that may not be present in non-humanitarian setting that can be leverage to transform harmful communities and institutionalized norms that promote ill health and safety of women and girls^[25].

10. Areas Covered to Prevent VAWGs in Nigeria

The areas covered in Nigeria to prevent VAWGs include societal factors, law, policies and institutions related to VAWGs. Therefore, prevention and response to VAWGs in Nigeria focused on perception and understanding of VAWGS among target communities and potential beneficiaries. Thus, at community level focus is on women livelihood programs so as to mitigate against VAWGs. This is, done through focusing directly on VAWGs risk factors among women and girls. In addition, practical measures to mitigate these risk factors using available resources are also incorporated in VAWGs programs. However, the NFWP seek to extend its learning and guidance to the larger audience who seek to participate in development programs that could mitigate VAWGs risk factors^[11].

It is estimated that about 35% of women over the age of 15 experienced violence, that is 818 million women globally^[26]. However, the commonest form of violence was said to be Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). Globally 30% of women out of which 7% of them was said to have experienced sexual violence by non-partners thus, economically making VAWGs to cost about 1.2% and 3.7% of the GDP^[27]. In Nigeria, like elsewhere in the world VAWGs in home, working places, markets and along the way is a common experience. VAWGs not only prevent women and girls from earning an income that affects them economically but also restrict them from engaging in productive and profitable life. Hence, VAWGs has great impact on economic growth and development. For instance, a woman may lose income, opportunity for promotion and a job as a result of VAWGs in home and at work. Similarly, a woman faces the cost of sick days, lower productivity and poor concentration which may possibly disrupt her as well as cost of recruitment and retraining^[28]. However, women empowerment program in Nigeria aimed to improve women income due to the threat of VAWGs. In other words, optimize development program with focus on women empowerment is essentially to address VAWGs in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aimed at impacting health of women and girls, education and participation in work. This is due to the fact that VAWGs violate human right of women and girls which may have negative effects on long term peace, stability and economic prosperity. Similarly, women lack economic empowerment compounded to be discriminatory against women and girls due to social norms which vastly increase their vulnerability to violence in Nigeria. This vulnerability of VAWGs continue to go from generation to generation with repeated cycle of discriminatory practice and abuse. Though, the national and international commitments to mitigate VAWGs has being an utmost priority in Nigeria. Hence, the framework and strategic action against VAWGs include empowering women and girls' programs. These programs give priority to women empowerment, thus tackling VAWGs includes commitment to improve women and girls access to and control over economic asset^[29]. Similarly, the Nigerian government is also providing employment opportunities (with good working conditions), enterprises (includes discriminatory laws) and assets (includes control and retention by women) women in fragile and conflict affected regions; refugees and IDPs. For instance, in Maiduguri women entrepreneurs face low simple businesses or net-works that will support women empowerment^[7].

11. Conclusion

Nationally and internationally, VAWGs constitute a crime from the legal point of view. Thus, to combat VAWGs included in series of declarations and conventions on eliminations of all kinds of discriminatory practice. However, the VAWGs still persisted despite all these legislations. Women empowerment is a key as poverty or economic underdevelopment is major cause of women incapacity thereby exposing them to the danger of VAWGs. Therefore, integrating women empowerment into development may likely combat VAWGs in Nigeria.

12. Recommendations

In light of the findings of the study, it is recommended that the development plan should encompass women empowerment program which in turn can combat violence against women and girls. The prevention and response strategy for violence against women and girls should deliver on policy areas as a complementary way. Women empowerment is feasible when women are able to earn their own income without relying on their male partners; and also, women should actively part in politics and public domain. The women empowerment programs like girl child education, women employment, women entrepreneurship, women microfinance should be effectively planned and implanted by the government of Nigeria.

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