

When Development Agents are Robbed: An Analysis of the Role of Women in Community Development

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Abstract

It is fair and crucial to give honour to whom it is due. It is unfair to deny anyone of the benefits of one's effort. The development of a sense of community is one sweet phenomenon that marks sustainable development. The pursuit and realization of this reality is one that drives sundry conscious socio-economic and political activities. Incidentally, the way things have come to be, with the urban areas providing the locus for the men and women who govern, the rural-dwellers are consciously or unconsciously presented as inert. This negative or *sub-human* perception is even worse in regard to the rural women. However, in the same manner in which the Air Force would be ineffective without the enabling ground forces, this study looks at the rural women in regard to the provision of the enabling environment for community development. The study considered the true position vis-a-vis the obfuscating shibboleth concerning our rural women. Based on a population of 277,119, the study looked at the challenges, using the questionnaire instrument on a sample size of 400. The study made several interesting findings, notable among these relate to the land tenure and property ownership and other attendant or allied discriminatory and offensive cultural practices. These guided the suggestions, a major one of which is further policy platforms to drive the empowerment of rural women, the girl-child education to the tertiary level is germane too in this regard, in addition to other recommendations.

Key Words: .Role .Rural women .Community development .Enugu East .Cultural Practices

Introduction

There are so many angles to this work. Each poses its own challenges/puzzles. To begin with, in the world today, the human population resides in essentially two areas viz, the rural and the urban areas- with the third, the *suburb*, being a transitional or residue state.

Now, a majority of the population of Nigeria resides in the rural areas (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012). Be that as it may, without detaining ourselves about the structure of the Nigerian economy or the unraveling dynamics of globalization, suffice to note that the situation is going to remain the same into the foreseeable future (Olisa and Obiukwu 1992, Ake, 1981; Nnoli, 1981; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012).

Therefore, if everyone counts in an economy and in a democracy, then, these citizens who find themselves in the rural areas need and deserve attention as a critical mass of Nigerians.

Put differently, the gross domestic product, GDP, is simply the composite of the domestic output of all the citizens -male/female, urban/rural plus the *suburbia*. Incidentally, while the population of Nigeria is for all practical purposes split into almost two equal parts on the basis of gender, on the urban-rural *demographics* (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012) most Nigerians are rural dwellers. It is from their rural base that they contribute their quota to national development.

Suffice it to note at this point, that the male gender for quite some centuries now appears to have dominated the world policy platforms, almost to the point of denying the genuine contributions of women to human civilization. The questions that, therefore, arise for our purposes include: Do the facts on the ground support the position? Are women merely *breeders and wheel-barrow*s, while the men are the catalysts who determine the course of development?

Could it be argued in a sustainable way that women have consciously and conscientiously contributed to human social development in the community, particularly, in the rural areas? What are the parameters for the gauging or assessment of such contributions, if any?

From another side to the equation, the *United Nations Organization Decade For Women*, (1976-1985) in consideration of these issues and allied matters made it mandatory for all governments the world over, to focus on the issue of women as an integral component of national development. Subsequently, in 1979, the United Nations General Assembly, UNGA, adopted the convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Sequel to this, United Nations conferences on women were held in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1980; Nairobi, Kenya in 1985 and Beijing, China in 1995.

This takes us to another angle to this endeavour. In this respect, the so-to-say *popular* focus of attention on the contribution on women to national development seems to be about the women *Elite* who reside in the urban areas or even overseas or abroad: Here we have the politicians, the successful business women and professionals and a host of others in the media/communication, fashion, entertainment and manufacturing sectors of the economy. These include Mrs. Funmilayo Ransom-Kuti, Margarette Ekpo; Miriam Babangida, Mariam Abacha, Stella Obasanjo, Victoria Gowon, Mrs. Ramat Murtala Mohamed, Mrs. Salami Abubakar, Turai Umoro Yar Adua, Prof Dora Akunyili, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Dame Patience Goodluck-Jonathan and a host of others-including the Nollywood stars plus Chimamada Adichie and so forth.

Suffice it to note at this juncture, that the way things are presented, underlying the programmes, and projects of the first ladies and other *elite* women is this impression that these are to connect the rural women to the mainstream of women empowerment and, invariably, to community and rural development. The question for us is: aside from these programmes, have the rural women been incapable of generation of self-help efforts as regards community and rural development?

We hasten to add at this juncture that, the idea of the Beijing conference and the follow-up campaigns on women empowerment and the interlacing of these matters with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, MDGs, indicate the importance and the recognition and the need for the enhancement of the contributions of women in national development: Though the aim is unquestionably transformational, the critical role of women in community and rural development since the dawn of civilization seems to have by such motion been overshadowed by the mind-set unconsciously associated with the women-related programmes and their attendant clamour. I hasten to add at this juncture, that the aims of the foregoing observation is not to deny the importance of these programmes (which remain obvious) but to recognize appreciate and salute the effort of our rural women who have for long been denied of appreciation and the attendant motivation or incentive to do more.

Accordingly, notwithstanding, the several municipal/local, national and global initiatives aimed at the encouragement and promotion of the participation of rural women in development, there is need to actually apprehend or capture the contributions of rural women in concrete or specific terms as proof of their especial socioeconomic and even political importance, and need to recognize appreciate, respect and, ultimately, enhance these contributions.

i. Why Are We Doing This?

As already indicated the aim is to reward achievement by giving due recognition to the rural women. In specific terms, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the rural woman in community and rural development.
2. Identify the conditions that enhance the contributions of the rural women to community and rural development.
3. Identify the conditions that are dysfunctional.
4. Proffer suggestions based on the findings concerning the following matters-
 - a. How to enhance the role of the rural women in community and rural development.
 - b. How to make our rural women know that they are appreciated, cared for, and protected.
 - c. How to enhance their capacity or empower them.

ii. How do we intend to achieve this aim or convince others to contribute their quota as regards this agenda?

This takes us to these questions to guide the research:-

- A. What defines a rural area as well as a rural woman?
- B. What defines rural and community development?
- C. What are the factors that enhance and those that work against the rural women as regards community and rural development?
- D. What is to be done to enhance the capacity of our rural women as well as enhance a sense of community?

iii. Our Perceptual Lenses and Tools

This section defines the crucial elements in this endeavour-community development, women and allied matters.

- i. **Community Development-** To begin with, what is development? According to Diana Hunt (1989,p.1):

Every student of Development Economics can expect to encounter in the literature, a number of different perceptions of the process of development and under-development. The fact that this is so widens the area of debate and the scope for disagreement among students of ostensibly same range of problems. Confusion may be worse confounded by virtue of the fact that the different approaches are associated with different interpretations of development. Some of the nature and process of development or under-development have come to command for varying periods of time widespread support in the course of which they have both generated significant theoretical developments and informed various types of more practical activity such as economic planning and policy formation.

Be that as it may, one is comforted as well as simultaneously challenged by the fact that notwithstanding the contentious nature of development, it is something real. This is crevice in the fact that societies are ranked or rank themselves or acquiesce to being ranked as "developed or "Underdeveloped" "Third World", "Second World" and so forth. (Nnoli, 1981, Etzioni and Etzioni, 1964, Nwosu, 1983,pp.4-5).

Development is, all in all, about the ability to meet up with and/or surmount challenges thrown at people (as individuals and as groups) by the environment-internal as well as external. Hence, development is and derives from the qualitative improvement of human labour. It is not just about artefacts, though this is not unimportant. It is about perfection and the factors that foster and sustain perfection in all fields of human endeavour.

Accordingly, development is the transformation of the lives of people; it is about capacity building/enhancement: Where this transformation revolves around goods and services that enhance trade, commerce, investment and industry, we speak generally about economic development. In the end, economic development is all about economic progress and integration and allied matters. On the other hand, political development is all about political system capacity. It is all about the quantum and quality of openness/transparency, participation and inclusiveness of people as individuals and as groups in policy formulation in a political system. Now, to the social development angle: It is all about the development of a sense of community-particularly the abolition of all obstacles to the realization of this value-be they political or economic.

From the foregoing, community development defines the extent of the development of organic solidarity among members of a particular social formation. This solidarity is autonomic and voluntary. It grows from the attachment to the social formation by the volition of those involved. It is both a voluntary but deterministic phenomenon. Voluntary because it flows from the voluntary emotional cum practical attachment of those involved. It is deterministic because there are certain socio-economic and political correlates to this phenomenon. Put differently, there are certain structural demands such as basic infrastructure, policy making and implementation mechanisms and so on. With the appropriate structure and allied matters in place, community in the end, involves a meeting of minds, soul and spirit. Although in some sense, it involves boundaries, but in another sense, attitudinally, it is beyond boundaries.

ii. *Rural*-to-begin with, dictionaries define *Rural* as: *of the country, a country-dwellers, to rusticate*" etc (Macdonald, A.M 1980,p.1184; Lechner 2004,p.872). Be that as it may, what is critical is that the only clinical definition of rural is obtainable only within the purview of its dialectical opposite, *urban*. Accordingly, what is urban-area as a phenomenon or reality vis-à-vis the rural area?

Simply put without going into technical detail in which, there is yet to be a clear agreement (Elekwa, N.N, 2001,pp.16/17), the urban areas or cities are in any economy of concern, the centres of innovation, advancement, transformation-economically, politically, socially and, accordingly and, most importantly technologically. They provide the nerve-centres of the economy, so-to-speak (Elekwa, N.N, 2001,pp. 16-46)

In comparison with the urban areas or cities (depending on the economy of focus, interest or reference), the rural areas are the backward enclaves of the economy or hinterlands or country side. Compared with the urban areas, they are backward in all respects, except, may be for Agriculture where they provide the fulcrum of national agricultural, production. The standard of living in the rural area is very far below that of the urban areas. Hence, according to the Igbos of Nigeria, the urban Areas are *Obodo Ndi Mepere Emepe.Those who have seen the light!* On the other hand, the rural areas are the darksome ones -*Ndi no ochichirii!* Those who are yet to see the light. Thus the sometimes conscious and at other times unconscious feeling/attitude of superiority on the part of urban-dwellers vis-à-vis rural- dwellers.

Now, to the crux of the matter: the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) is at Abuja while there are 36 states and 774 Local Government Areas that make up the constituent parts of the federation of Nigeria. Incidentally, notwithstanding the pace of urbanization, the greater percentage of the population and the area is rural. In Enugu State, a core South East Nigeria state-which is doing well by national and international assessment, about 70 percentage of the population is still rural-based (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012) If such is the situation in Enugu South East, Nigeria, this help's the reader think about the urban-rural composition of other states in the South-South, South-West, North Central, North East and North West Nigeria. And there is little in the horizon to indicate that this rural-urban statistics is about to change within a foreseeable future.

A corollary to the foregoing is that the rural areas and the dwellers have been treated as of no considerable consequence in regard to national development (that is aside from its utilization as a pawn in the political chess board during elections and to test-run political formulae). A state of affairs, consciousness or mentality, which we had earlier on explained as arising from the comparatively lower standards of living of the rural-dwellers vis-à-vis the urban dwellers. It is, accordingly in regard to these issues and considerations that this study seeks to find out how true it is that the rural women (the other part of the rural dwellers are inert as regards national development-particularly rural development. However, before we turn to the rural women as regards rural development in Nigeria, a synopsis of efforts at rural development in Nigeria).

iv. The Story So Far in Regard to Rural Development

To begin with, there was a time when the issue of rural development was not even part of the government agenda. There was no policy as regards rural development. Rural areas mattered as regards food production, political mobilization and cultural festivals. These were in the days of palm produce, cocoa and groundnut pyramids. What mattered was the agricultural produces. There was no deliberate government policy and allied programmes and projects as regards rural development. Though there were aspects of development, here and there, but these were largely fortuitous. The focus of attention of government was on the development of the urban centres. In other words, making life good for the urban areas-where the socio-economic and political elite aggregated aliens and natives alike.

Sequel to the oil boom and the attendant rural-urban migration with its several unintended consequences such as unemployment, armed robbery, prostitution housing/accommodation and other challenges, the matter of rural development became a matter of necessity, a veritable national challenge. Therefore, beginning with the 1970s and 1980s, rural development began to receive deliberate government attention. The programmes in this regard include River Basin, Development Authorities, Directorate for Good Roads and

Rural infrastructure (DFRRI) electrification initiative, Better Life for Rural Women, enhancement of Rural Roads construction and so forth (Olisa and Obiukwu, 1992, pp.89,93,386-399).

There is no gainsaying that there is much room for improvement as regards these efforts at rural development. The focus of this study, however, is to consider in the light of the challenge of rural community development, the rural women in regard to their contributions, if any, the challenges that they get confronted with, if any and what is to be done to enhance the rural women as well as her contribution to community development?

v. Hypotheses

From the foregoing, the following are the hypotheses for the purposes of our endeavour:

Ho: Rural women have not contributed in a significant way to community development in South East Nigeria.

Hi: Rural Women have contributed in a significant way to community development in South East Nigeria.

vi. The Arena

The Enugu East Local Government Area is one of the three Local Government Areas created from the defunct Enugu Local Government Area. Its headquarters is located at Nkwo Nike which is beside the Nike Lake Resort Enugu. According to the 2006 census figures (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012) the population of the area is two hundred and seventy seven thousand one hundred and nineteen (277,119); made up of one hundred and forty five thousand, nine hundred and five (145,905) females and one hundred and thirty one thousand, two hundred and fourteen males.

There are 20 (twenty) political wards in the Local Government Area, viz: Abakpa I, Abakpa II, Abakpa III, Amoji, Edem, Emene, Federal Housing, Ibagwa, Mbulu Iyi Ukwu I, Mbulu Iyi Ukwu II, Mbulu Jodo, Mbulu Jodo II, Mbulu Owehe I, Mbulu Owehe II, Obinagu Iji, Onu Agu Harmony, Trans-Ekulu, Ugwuogo, Umuchigbo, Umuenwene. About two-thirds of these wards are clearly rural formations.

vii. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

In regard to the determination of the sample size, the Taro Yamane formula assisted the researcher in the endeavour.

The formula is

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$$

Where -

- n - Sample size
- N - Population
- 1 - Constant
- e - Error Margin (0.05)

$$= \frac{277,119}{1+277,119 \times 0.05^2} = \frac{277,119}{1+277,119 \times 0.025} = \frac{277,119}{693.8} = 399.4$$

This was approximated to be 400. Now, concerning the sampling technique, an equal number of respondents/participants was allotted to each of the twenty wards on the basis of the *equality of status* and convenience principles. This gave us a total of 20 respondents to each ward. However, no population is a monolith: Apart from gender, there were other considerations. Accordingly, in the quest for reliable data the researcher purposively selected respondents across segments, clusters, groups within the 20 wards, in search of opinion as would aid valid conclusions concerning the contributions of rural women to community development in Enugu East Local Government Area. Therefore, the main instrument for the research, the questionnaire (appendix) had to be distributed to the Igwes/principal officers of

the Igwe's Cabinet, Town Union Executive members, autonomous community, executives/operatives. Community based cooperative society operatives, men, women and youth faith-based organization leaders and other opinion leaders including local government officials as determined by the situation on the ground regarding the crux of the matter.

viii. Props

This section looks at the instrument return rate and the analytical mode.

Concerning the instrument return rate, 388, constituting 97% of the respondents returned their copies of the questionnaire in working order, 3 were poorly filled and, therefore, invalid while 9 were never returned.

In the analysis of the data gathered, the researcher applied the *basics* raised as regards *development, community development* and *rural* formations in combination with the systems perspective- in particular, the structural-functional perspective. According to Varma (1985, pp.45/46):

The structural-functional analysis revolves around certain concepts-more important of them being the concept of functions and structures.

These basic questions are involved:

- (a) What basic functions are fulfilled in any given system?
- (b) by what structures? And
- (c) under what conditions?

.... There may be...manifest and latent functions. The manifest functions deal with patterns of action whose consequences are both intended and recognized... A latent function deals with patterns of action whose consequences are unintended and unrecognized by the participants.

... While functions deal with the consequences involving objectives as well as processes... of patterns of actions, structures refer to those arrangements within the system which perform the functions.

It is noteworthy that functionalism underscores the principle of organic relationship between various structures/units existing in a system in terms of their functions. Accordingly, any susceptibility or flaw in a part of the system creates imbalances and obviates appropriate outcomes correspondingly, where things sustainably go well for any structure the whole system stands to gain. In this case, the abundant energies of our rural women in regard to community development need to be recognized and harnessed.

We now turn to how things stand in regard to the role of the rural women in community development in Enugu East Local Government Area.

ix. The Situation on the Ground

In section VII above, the manner of the population, sample and allied matters were indicated: The demographic data take up the first three items of the questionnaire. Suffice it to note, that the respondents involved an equal distribution of male and female respondents across all the Age brackets included and social statuses involved namely, females and males, adults, youths and children, traditional institution and faith based leaders-men, women and youths, politicians and so forth. The reason being that community development is about everybody, men and women, boys and girls, old and Young as well as the attendant attitudinal, as well as infrastructural appurtenances and matters. Be that as it may, the fundamental issues drawn from the background objectives, research questions and hypotheses which provide only six options of response provided the basis. for the remainder of the questionnaire, that is questionnaire items 4-40. The table below presents the survey:

Questionnaire Item	Options						Total
	SA	A	SD	D	U	I	
4	108	216	20	10	20	14	388
5	156	168	5	20	30	9	388
6	20	16	180	126	35	11	388
7	180	128	40	9	5	13	388
8	4	6	203	138	20	17	388
9	250	108	-	-	10	10	388
10	10	25	190	128	10	25	388
11	190	128	25	30	10	5	388
12	50	60	40	30	120	88	388
13	30	40	88	150	50	30	388
14	30	40	88	150	50	30	388
15	198	120	10	25	10	25	388
16	108	216	20	10	20	14	388
17	200	110	10	30	15	23	388
18	118	180	50	20	10	10	388
19	203	118	10	10	15	32	388
20	108	216	20	10	20	14	388
21	198	120	10	25	10	15	388
22	198	130	10	25	10	15	388
23	108	200	50	20	6	4	388
24	203	118	10	10	15	32	388
25	98	149	60	51	20	10	388
26	205	120	20	10	15	18	388
27	108	216	20	10	20	14	388
28	156	168	5	49	4	6	388
29	108	216	20	10	14	20	388
30	190	128	30	15	15	10	388
31	10	30	180	140	20	8	388
32	180	128	40	9	5	13	388
33	150	180	15	35	5	3	388
34	150	180	15	30	8	5	388
35	140	188	25	15	10	10	388
36	205	120	20	10	15	18	388
37	108	216	20	10	20	14	388
38	156	168	5	49	6	4	388
39	150	180	15	30	8	5	388
40	203	118	20	20	15	12	388

Source: Research Data, 2012.

x. Breaking it Down

The central problem of this endeavour is to find out, from facts on the ground in Enugu East Local Government Area, whether the rural women have contributed in any significant way to community development in the formation.

A corollary to the foregoing quest is whether, as a collective, the rural women have received their due recognition and regard in this respect and accordingly, what challenges and what is to be done for more qualitative social existence for the rural women and all.

To begin with, among the several communities in Nigeria, self-help seems to be most appreciated, so far, among the Igbos of South East Nigeria. There are several cases of community development projects and programmes by town unions, village unions, age grades, several urban (elite) women groups as well as philanthropic or public-spirited organizations and individuals (Udoye, 1992,p.93). Most of these however, celebrate elite men and their wives

and families. Incidentally; scant, if any, attention has been paid to the contribution of the rural women (as a collective) in regard to community development and how to make deliberate and coordinated effort in regard to harnessing this abundant resource in regard to development. Accordingly, we turn to the findings of this study. This takes us back to the research objectives and allied questions and hypotheses. We hasten to note at this juncture that the definition of the rural area and rural women need not detain us any longer. Sufficient attention has been given in this regard in the earlier Sections of this work as well as the questionnaire (see items 8,9,10,11 and 15). Therefore, we turn to findings concerning the role of the rural women in community development vis-à-vis the perception and other attendant challenges to the rural women of South East Nigeria as decipherable from the Enugu East Local Government Area.

x(a) On the Perception of the Rural Women in Regard to Community Development

There is a pervasive consciousness among the people that the rural women do not count as regards community development. In this respect, items 12 and 31 of the questionnaire are relevant. Concerning item No 12 on whether the rural women in South East Nigeria contribute in any significant manner to community development, 50 respondents constituting 12.88% Strongly Agreed, while 60 (15.46%) Agreed. This gives us 28.34% of the respondents. On the other hand, 40 (10.31%); 30 (7.73%) 120 (30.93%) and 88 (22.68%) Strongly Disagreed, Disagreed, stayed Undecided or were Indifferent respectively. So, all in all, the general perception regarding the rural women in development is negative. However, by the time the respondents got to item 31 on whether the rural women in Enugu East receive the status and significance due them in regard to their contribution to community development, the response turned thus-10(2.58%), 30 (7.73%), 150 (46.39%), 140 (36.08%) 20 (5.15%) and 8 (2.06%) Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Strongly Disagreed, Disagreed, remained Undecided and Indifferent respectively. There seems, therefore, to be a significant difference between perception and reality on the ground in regard to the rural women and community development. Responses to item 40 equally count in the same direction.

x(b) On The Contributions And Therefore, Abiding Role Of The Rural Women To Community Development

In this connection items 13 to 30 of the questionnaire are very germane. The data above presents the situation on the ground from the survey. Suffice it to note that the rural women contribute to community development in fundamental ways. What will remain of *Orie Emene, Eke Obinagu, Nkwo Nike* and all the markets around without the rural women? Where will the materials and traders come from? What about the sustenance of the education and apprenticeship of their children and wards? What will happen to the cassava growers, garri producers, chicken farmers, piggery farmers and other FADAMA cooperative societies without the rural women of Enugu East? Who runs the Bars and Restaurants to prevent the men from the anger that flows from hunger? How do we quantify these inestimable contributions to community development? What about the cultural dances and displays that keep the community motivated and sustained? The survey gives us just a glimmer of the reality on the ground concerning the role of the rural women in community development in Enugu East local Government Area and beyond.

x(c). On the Challenges that Distort and Thwart the Contributions and Efforts of the Women

In this regard, items 32 to 39 of the questionnaire count. There are many challenges. These, as decipherable from the survey, include stereotypes and *demonization* of otherwise hardworking rural women. There are health challenges. The situation is not helped by the inadequacy of public health services. There is the issue of customs and traditions and allied customary practices that are harmful, in the long-run, to the interests of the women and therefore, their capacity to contribute to the over all development of the community. There are challenges that flow from illiteracy and ignorance. The problem of electricity or power supply is another fundamental challenge. In this connection, as small scale entrepreneurs involved in hair dressing/salon textile tailoring, poultry and so forth, many get kicked out of business as a result of the inability to meet up with the demands of power, rents, and the general maintenance of their families.

There are fundamental challenges that revolve around the land tenure and property ownership practices which frustrate drive among the rural women of Enugu East Local Government Area. The situation is not helped by several communal crises in some wards of the local government area. The rural women bear the brunt of these crises as their farms, barns, crops, goats, sheep, piggery and so on get looted, burnt leaving the owners impoverished.

xi. Conclusion

From the findings, there is no doubt that rural women have been robbed or denied of their due share of recognition, respect, reward as regards community development. This robbery/denial flows from the perception of the rural dwellers including the rural women, as underachievers, failures and dependents. How unfair! The rural women provide the foundation for community development. From the provision of the first *homeland* to every member of the community through Motherhood; they give them skills, formal education and sustenance. There is no gainsaying that the biography of most of our socioeconomic and political elite will be grossly incomplete without the contribution of our mothers in the rural areas. Aside from that, the rural women provide the structures that foster, enhance and sustain a sense of community through their activities in Umuada, Churches, Cultural activities and so forth. Accordingly, the value of the rural women as regards development is inestimable. If the rural women are appropriately recognized, assisted and reinforced, community development will receive a great boost. We have made few recommendations in this regard. There is room for improvement. As the Igbos put it: *Ifeoma adi agwu agwu!* There is no end to goodness.

xii. Recommendations

No one theory provides all the answers. However, in regard to the endeavour so far, we recommend as follows: beginning from the last finding on conflicts, there is need to be proactive in this respect. There is need for more vigilance by the local government in regard to the security of lives and property. Disputes should be nipped in the bud before it turns monstrous. Accordingly, the traditional institution officials (here Igwes and autonomous community leaders and towns union leaders) and political/ward representatives of communities involved in the destruction of lives and property should be held vicariously responsible and suspended or removed from office as a deterrence/warning to others. Where the matter is spontaneous, those found culpable should pay prohibitive compensation to victims. Peace is crucial for development.

Concerning power health, roads and other infrastructural back-stoppings for development, we recommend that these be provided. When given the interventionist/task force effort which the rural women and rural development deserve, improvement of substantial and sustainable level will result. At present a majority of the constituent communities is yet to witness health facilities such as health centres. This is not good for development -it is said that health is wealth. The same goes for education and libraries and so forth. These should be established.

Regarding the issue of harmful customary practices, we recommend that the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) drive -advocacy in this regard and direct a *dedicated* structure to do something sustainable about it.

Furthermore, it is unfair and contradictory in the 21st century to remain condemned to the burden of discrimination, stereotypes and other allied evil attitude. There is therefore, need for reorientation, introspection and circumspection. As Martin Luther King Jnr. put it - "*I have a dream that one day my four little children will be judged not on the basis of their colour but on the content of their character*". What is good for the goose is good for the gander! Recognition, placement, position, promotion should not be on the basis of sex or residence or appearance but on the basis of what someone has to offer, provide or provided in regard to the realization of organizational goals. This is particularly so as regards concrete contributions, achievement or performance in regard to sustainable development. The defining terms is *Content* not Sex or Gender

Our rural women deserve recognition and respect for their role so far in regard to rural development. Our rural women need critical boost in regards to empowerment and or capacity building.

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