

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **The new partnership for Africa's development (NEPAD) policy on women empowerment in Africa: A critical appraisal**

**Mahmudat Olawunmi Muhibbu-Din**

Department of Political Science and Public Administration, College of Management and Social Sciences, Fountain University, PMB 4491, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. E-mail: [ajocurrent@yahoo.com](mailto:ajocurrent@yahoo.com). Tel: +2348054317471.

Accepted 26 November, 2010

**The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a new continent-wide development strategy targeted at halting poverty in Africa in the twenty-first century. The NEPAD policy initiators seek to promote the roles of women in all activities as one of its long term goal of developing Africa through various strategies spelt out under International Development Goal by promoting income generating avenue that can enhance the status of women. This paper therefore examines: (i) the feminist theoretical framework of the policy document, (ii) the extent its bolsters women economic roles, (iii) the degree it expands the political space in a way to facilitates greater women participation, and (iv) the social status of women in Africa by addressing the injustices and oppression women suffer. Content analysis is used in appraising the NEPAD policy document while data collection method is based on secondary sources which include journals, textbooks, seminar paper presentation, policy documents, monographs and internet. NEPAD policy design, planning and implementation has neither been inclusive nor participatory of the views, perspectives, yearnings and aspiration of women. It does not address women problem in a way that can facilitate women empowerment. Conclusively, NEPAD needs to shift its policy position to truly address the problem of women oppression, and embark on greater advocacy to ensure better participation and inclusiveness in the policy formulation and implementation process in a way that is responsive to gender imperative. NEPAD policy must be a product of the people, and must shift from the top-down approach to a bottom-up approach to be truly inclusive and facilitative of social transformation.**

**Key words:** NEPAD, women empowerment, gender, feminism, development policy.

## **INTRODUCTION**

On ascendancy to political freedom, African nations have experimented with numerous continent-wide project of economic and development cooperation. The continent fore-runners include 'revised framework of principles' for the implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa (1975 to 1977), to the Monrovia Strategy (1979) and culminating in the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action (1980 to 2000) and Final Act of Lagos (1980). Other landmark strategies since the 1980s are Africa's Priority Program for Economic Recovery 1986 to 1990 (APPER) which later converted to the United Nations Program of

Action for Africa's Economic Recovery (UN-PAARED) (1986 to 1990). The Abuja Treaty of 1991 as part of the effort at the second liberation of Africa in the 1990s, the Africa Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Program for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) 1989; the African Charter for the Popular Participation for Development (1990) and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UNN-NADA) (1991) (Akinrinade, 2003: 5-6; Onimode et al., 2004: 20-21; Galadima 2003: 3; Obi, 2002: 5). The current framework to chart African

development is the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD). NEPAD was the product of the merger of the Millennium Partnership for African Recovery and Omega Plan of Presidents Thabo Mbeki (South Africa) and Abdullahi Wade (Senegal) respectively. The sponsors of NEPAD described it as “holistic, comprehensive integrated strategic framework” which aimed at the economic recovery and sustainable development of the continent. One of the long term objectives of NEPAD is “to promote the role of women in all activities”. Hence, this study attempts a critical analysis of the NEPAD policy on women empowerment and the implication for sustainable development.

### Statement of problem

It has been observed that development policies in Africa have not adequately addressed the problem of women especially their poor integration into African society. African women constitute over 50% of the entire continent's population. Besides, it is well documented in literature, the significant roles and contribution of African women to socio-economic development overtime. In spite of this, development policies have not only failed to recognize these roles and make provision for empowering women in the continent, rather, women's position as critical development agent has been relegated to the background. Austere development policies that impoverish women further entrenching the idea of the “feminization of poverty”. Development policies foreclose the strategies of creating opportunities and expanding women's choices in the society.

It is an undisputed fact that, development could neither be gained nor sustained if a considerable proportion of the population is excluded in the process. Moreover, the System of National Account (SNA) neglect the vital contribution of women especially as the informal sector goes unaccounted in the Gross National Product (GNP). The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) retrogresses development gains, increasing socially vulnerable and the worse affected are weaker section of the society. This further disempowers and excludes women in Africa. Therefore, this paper seeks to investigate:

- (i) The relevant feminist theories on women empowerment identify the current NEPAD theoretical position on women and suggest a more appropriate theoretical framework for women empowerment in Africa.
- (ii) The extent NEPAD policy bolsters the economic roles of women in Africa.
- (iii) NEPAD policy in broadening the political space to be more inclusive thereby facilitating the political participation of women.
- (iv) Whether NEPAD policy enhances the social status of women in Africa by militating against the injustices and oppression women suffer.

### Theoretical framework

Varying feminist perspectives have explained the problem of women oppression and ways of liberating them from different worldview. For Keohane and Gelpi (1982: vii). Feminist theory is fundamentally experiential. Its subject is women's lives, past or present, historically recorded or known only by inference experienced with men of dominant culture. In the view of Khan (2000: 71) feminism is the recognition of patriarchy as a system of male oppression and domination, which has a material that is (economic) base. Feminists do not agree on the ways to explain women's subordination or how women can be empowered (Abbot and Wallace, 1997: 30). Thus, the development of feminist thought has not only been uneven, but it has also always involved deep theoretical disagreements. Nevertheless, Stanley and Wise (1993: 46) observe that feminist explanations have a number of things in common in the sense that all of them are causal theories and some of them are not only causal but also mono-causal.

This paper shall limit its exposition of feminist theories on women empowerment to the following namely: liberal feminism, marxist feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism. Nevertheless, the paper will adopt the feminist political economy framework which is the integration of the best principles of liberal scholarship and the socialist feminist perspectives as a useful theoretical base for explaining women problems in Africa, and the analysis of gender equity as the essential platform for NEPAD to translate into women empowerment in the continent.

The liberal feminist theory argues that women have the same inalienable rights as men (Abbot and Wallace, 1997: 32). As a feminist theory, liberal feminism concentrates on rights in the public sphere such as equal educational opportunities, equal pay for equal work etc. (Crompton et al., 1990: 330-347). Liberal feminism rooted in the 16 and 17th centuries social contract theories with their ideal of liberty and equality based on man's rationality and in the premise of a sharp demarcation between public and private spheres (Stamp, 1989: 15). Critics of liberal feminism argue that women have manifestly failed to gain real equality with men in the worlds of work and politics (Whitworth, 1997: 12). This approach failed to address the structural inequalities in gender relations (Muhibbu-Din, 2007: 15). Liberal feminism, nonetheless, remained popular; it serves as a strong force for legal reform and women's political participation.

Radical feminism sees women oppression as rooted either in women's biological capacity for motherhood or in the innate biologically determined aggression of the male as manifested in rape (Abbot and Wallace, 1997: 33). Bryson (1992: 185-186) corroborates this when she observes that patriarchy relies upon sexual violence and rape, and sexual relation between men and women is but an expression of male power. Their insistence on the

'personal is the political', bridged the dichotomy between the personal and public – sex as the personal becomes political as well (Eisenstein, 1979: 18). Consequently, the state is but a manifestation of patriarchy power, reflecting other deep structures of oppression and women's well documented exclusion from its formal institution is a symptom rather than a cause of gender inequality. Bryson (1992: 188) criticizes radical feminist theory of patriarchy as descriptive rather than analytical. It is based on the false idea of man as the enemy; the theory is historical and based on false universalism. From this standpoint, western feminism has been accused of ethnocentrism. Nevertheless, radical feminism has made valuable contribution by employing ideological standpoint to criticize sexual violence and pornography vented on women (Stamp, 1989: 16).

Marxist feminism rejected the idea of a biological basis for gender discrimination. It argued that women oppression is a function of class oppression which according to them supersedes all forms of oppression (Williams, 1997: 145). Marxist analysis provides a class analysis necessary for the study of power, a method of analysis which is historical and dialectical (Eisenstein, 1979: 6-7). Mackinnon (1982: 11) asserts that women's liberation become a precondition, a measure of society's general emancipation, part of the superstructure and important aspect of class struggle for a socialist revolution. This approach flaws fatally in reductionism, for gender relations is reduced to relation of production, and Marx theory are not gender neutral based on male view of the world (Williams, 1997: 145; Bryson, 1992: 77).

Socialist feminism claim to combine the best of both marxist feminism and radical feminism. Through synthesis, marxist concepts are expanded to take account of specificity of gender relations, and the biological reductionism of radical feminism is transcended. Hence, the objective is to construct a political economy of women's subordination. The framework however, refused to commit itself to either the position of traditional marxists or to radical feminists. Thus, it does submit to the position that economic oppression is more basic than gender oppression or give priority to gender oppression. The approach draws widely cross-cultural and historical studies, which provide the empirical material for rigorous theorization of gender relations (William; 1997: 146). According to Hartsock (1979: 24) it is the particular relation and operation of the hierarchical sexual ordering of society within the class structure or the understanding of the class structure within the sexual ordering of society, which focuses upon human activity in capitalist patriarchy.

This typology cannot explain the oppression of women in non-Western societies. The developing countries as a whole suffer from the oppression of international economy and political forces. There is need for a more critical stance to challenge the structures of oppression and inequity. As a result, non – Western scholar did not

employ sophisticated theories grounded in historical materialism but conducted their studies "on the basis of their subtle and detailed empirical knowledge of third world gender oppression and their understanding that this oppression is rooted in wider exploitative structures and practice" (Stamp 1989: 181). They rejected the simplistic universal explanations which put all problems at the door of "patriarchy". There is a complexity of gender relations and of women's position which contradicts the simplistic sex-class division of radical feminism. Hence, stamp designs framework that encompasses both socialists feminist writing and critical liberal scholarship called feminist political economy.

Feminist political economy specifies the pluralistic framework within which attempt at theorizing African gender relations have been made (Stamp, 1989: 19). The approach attempts to show the centrality of gender relations to relations of production in both pre-capitalist and capitalist societies. It includes also those rigorously analyzed studies of non-Western feminist thinking whether it is either socialist feminist or Marxism. Feminist political economy is an integrated and comprehensive framework that captures the substructure and the superstructure of the social system and explicates the influence one has on other. This approach is holistic and extends to all dimensions of societal life. The analysis which notes the intricate inter-working of economic, political and ideological features of society rather than reducing economic features as the sole determinant of all cases may be more pertinent for the study of women in Africa. In summary then, though the patriarchal explanation of the African societies cannot be completely dismissed, the feminist political economy approach seeks to establish the kernel of gender relations to relations of production in pre-colonial/pre-capitalist and capitalist/postcolonial African societies.

Hence, there is need to reshape the NEPAD policy approach to the realities, interests, concerns and experiences of women in Africa. This paper argues for genuine gender equity rooted in feminist political economy framework relevant to historical complexities and circumstances of African women. The goal of gender equity transcends equality of opportunity by requiring transformative change. It recognizes that men and women have different needs, preferences and interests and that equality of outcomes may necessitate different treatment of men and women (Morgan et al., 2002: 16). Hence, it is imperative for NEPAD to outline specific strategy that enforce a gender sensitivity to meet and satisfy the perspectives and needs of women in an inclusive, equitable and participatory manner that guarantees the ultimate goal of women empowerment.

## METHODOLOGY

The research relies on secondary sources for data collection which

include journals, textbooks, seminar paper presentation, policy document, periodicals, monographs and internet sources. Data analysis used is content analysis and interpretative methodology.

### **NEPAD policy on women empowerment: A critical appraisal**

The NEPAD (2001, 67:16) has one of its long-term objectives “to promote role of women in all activities”. It also focuses on achieving the agreed International development goals, this include among others:

1. To make progress towards gender equality and empowering women by eliminating gender disparities in the enrolment in primary and secondary education by 2005.
2. To reduce maternal mortality ratios by three quarters between 1990 and 2015.
3. To provide access for all who need reproduction health services by 2015 (NEPAD 2001, 67: 15-6).

The NEPAD document under its poverty reduction policy also seeks to give special attention to the reduction of poverty among women. The strategy for intervention set “to establish a task team to ensure that specific issues faced by poor women are addressed in the poverty reduction strategies” (NEPAD, 2001: 119). Again, the objective under diversification of production, the NEPAD seeks to improve productivity of agriculture with particular attention to small scale and women farmers” (NEPAD, 2001: 157). On the overall, the NEPAD initiators agree the different program to accomplish these by promoting the role of women in social and economical development by reinforcing their capacity in the domains of education and training, by the development of revenue generating activities through facilitating access to credit, and by assuring their participation in the political and economical life of African countries (NEPAD 2001, 49:12).

These are the places where NEPAD policy addresses the problem of women. It is critical to note that the poverty reduction strategies to establish gender task forces, which is only to address the problem of poverty through access to micro-credit depict that the NEPAD has a narrow conception of poverty because it fails to address the structural constraints to poverty. Moreover, its strategy to promote gender equality in school enrolment has no connection to objectives under education (NEPAD 2001: 120). These render the overall long-term objectives “to promote the role of women in all activities” rather obscure. According to Randriamaro (2003: 2) “the current trends indicate that states are being recognized to serve the interests of market forces and this interest does not coincide with those of the dispossessed”. Moreover, the reality for poor women across countries reveals the reorganization of the state bears little relationship to the process of social transformation” (Randriamaro, 2003: 2). Thus, NEPAD

according to advocate of gender justice perpetuate economic and social exclusion of poor women while further entrenching the patriarchal patterns in politics increasing social vulnerability and inequalities including gender inequalities (Randriamaro, 2003: 12; Tadesse, 2002: 5). The development policy suffers from a narrow conception of poverty issues and the economic and social exclusion of poor women. Hence, the doctrine is neither socially equitable, pro-poor, pro-women nor environmentally sustainable. It reinforces the Washington Consensus promoted by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) of global governance of IMF/WB which is a glaring evidence of the gender insensitivity of the NEPAD in the sense that it ignores the devastating impact of policies and economic reform program imposed by IFIs on women and gender relations. The “feminization of poverty” tend to collapse all forms of disadvantages into poverty including the subordination of women, which ought to be addressed as a gender issue distinct from poverty (Randriamaro, 2003: 13).

Ige (2002: 1) posits that the structure and language of NEPAD is a reflection of the patriarchal nature of African society that encourages little or no female participation in its evolution. Under the key components for sustainable development in NEPAD document, absolutely nothing is propose in the areas of democracy and good governance and human rights which are crucial for women’s advancement, but which are supposed to be NEPAD’s priority area of interests. It has been argued that the involvement of women is vital for the efficiency of any development scheme or that of empowerment of women is the motor force for development of any kind. (Calvert and Calvert, 2001: 236). Thus, Longwe (2002: 1) points out that NEPAD policy tinkers with principles of gender equality. In principle it is much in favor of equal rights for women, but in practice its proposes almost nothing in the form of activities to realize these principles. Consequently, the doctrine excludes Agwu’s use of the instrumentality of democracy in such a way that “people become the means, agents and ends of the development that the people have their own development and are empowered in its process...” (Agwu, 2004: 30). Such development process is experiential, anchored on popular participation and inclusive but not exclusive deepening local democracy and democratization of the development process.

Obi (2002: 4) observes, it is easy to see that NEPAD did not result from participatory local, national and regional strategies appropriate to the particular concerns of poor and marginalized African countries. According to Randriamaro (2003: 4) formulation of this plan exudes the possibility of a major shift of the NEPAD from prevailing practices of “democracy”. The possibility of social transformation to end subordination inherent in gender relations or the “feminization of social transformation” through the NEPAD policy framework looms large. The economic role of women majority of who operates in the

informal sector is ignored in the policy document and the claim by promoters of NEPAD to address gender inequalities at the implementation stage through the planned actions targeted at women, none of these actions addresses key issues of access to resources such as time and property rights. Butegwa posits that this not only widens the gap between those who have and those who do not. It further marginalizes women. Consequently, how can African develop when the majority of its population is branded “unproductive” and starved of resources while the immense expertise and potential remains locked in? (Butegwa, 2002: 3).

The ICT is a miracle technology embraced by African government to leapfrog stages of development to empower the marginalized especially women living in rural Africa. Litho acknowledges the limited participation of women in the policy process and this alienates women's concern in the established ICT policies. Women find themselves in Africa restricted access to information or ICTs (litho, 2005: 5).

Zulu (2006: 2) adds we cannot hope to address gender imbalances in the benefits gained from the information society if we do not address gender issues at the level of ICT policy making. Gender gap already exists in employment patterns in the ICT sector. Many women are excluded socially from using ICT because of poverty and low income. The digital divide and hence development divide exists between men and women is largely due to economic factors arising from lack of resources illiteracy and low levels of education (Zulu, 2006: 3).

On agriculture, women's contribution to agriculture in Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) is greater than any part of the world (Boserup, 1970). Bryson (1981: 29) asserts women were found to do almost 80% of total work. Whitehead and Bloom (1992: 42) add that women produce food estimated between 60 to 80% including cash and marketing crops apart from food production for self consumption.

Yet NEPAD policy fails to recognize such enormous contribution in solving food crisis in the region.

### **The social, economic and political positions of women in Africa and NEPAD policy**

The contributions that women make to the economic, social and political lives of their nations, communities, families and the next generation make them key actors in effective development. The conditions under which African women have been participating in the development process have enabled them to enhance their capacity to utilize their physical and intellectual energies in promoting sustainable development. There are various dimensions to underscore women's role in development, this study focuses on the social, economic, and political positions of women in relation to the NEPAD policy.

### **Social position of women in Africa and NEPAD**

Regarding the fundamental rights of women, the right to nationality of married women, consent to marriage and registration continue to elude women and about half of the countries young girls are victims of genital mutilations. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is common in about 26 African countries and about 500, 000 women die annually in the developing countries of pregnancy related causes, the same numbers of women are incapacitated as a result of child rearing (Bukar, 1996: 18). Other forms of abuses of human rights of women go unrecorded for example domestic violence, rape and wife inheritance, which is now causing much concern because of HIV/AIDS transmission and spread. A high spending on non-social sectors implies taking resources from the badly needed and deserving social sectors where women and children are more likely to benefit. Low spending on education adding to high illiteracy rates and low economic status for women, High infant mortality and under 5 maternal mortality rates and unnecessary deaths resulting from poor health. Countries like Algeria, Egypt, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Sudan and Tunisia indicate reduction in military spending relative to health and education expenditure.

Recent and reliable data on the mortality and morbidity of women conditions and diseases particularly affecting women are not available in many countries. Relatively little is known about how social and economic factor affect the health of girls and women of all ages, about the provision of health services to girls and women of all ages and pattern of the use of health services, and about the value of disease prevention and health promotion programs for women (ACW, 2007: 11). Higher infant and under 5 mortality rates often arise from poverty, poor nutrition and health conditions. Only 15 countries have below 80 infant deaths per 1000 live births (1996) while the under 5 mortality rate range between 46 and 110. These are mainly countries of North African, Southern African and Mauritius. 16 countries have between 70 and 99 while the rest range between 100 and 191, the highest infant mortality rates are to be found in Niger 191, Angola 170, Sierra Leone 164, Malawi 137, and Mali 134. A comparison between African and other regions shows that African has the highest infant mortality rate. Sub-Sahara Africa has 154 (1960) and 105 (1996) while Industrialized countries 31 and 5 for the same period (ACW, 2007: 12). However, this is one area where significant progress has been made. In almost all countries, infant and U5MR have gone down to below half or one third of the 1960 figures. Infant mortality rate per 1000 still stands at 120 for Nigeria, 68 for Ghana, South Africa 46, Congo Democratic Republic (CDR) 129, Rwanda 118 and Sierra Leone 165, Liberia 159 in 2004.(Njokanma, 2006: 3-4). U5MR/1000 live birth stood at 235 (1997) for Nigeria, CDR 205, Rwanda 203, Sierra Leone 283, Somalia 225, Ethiopia 166. Similarly, maternal mortality

rates are generally very high in Africa. 13 countries have between 1000 and 1800 per 100, 000. The great majority of Sub-Sahara African countries range between 600 and 999, while only ten countries have rate below 600. Mauritius 120, Tunisia 170, Algeria 460, Egypt 170, Libya 220, South Africa 230, Botswana 250, Namibia 270, Swaziland 560 and Zimbabwe 570 (ACW, 2007: 13). In Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso only 20% of girls are in school (80% are out of school) against 70% for boys (ACW, 2007: 9). Except Morocco (57%) all other North African countries have reached 80% as most of the Southern African countries. Mauritius 84%, Cape Verde 81% and Kenya 66% are other good performers. Most glaring gender gaps are to be found in Togo where female enrolment for 1996 is 39% against 92% for boys followed by Benin with a difference of 28%, Guinea 20%, Gambia 17%, and Sierra Leone 14%. Insignificant gender gaps are to be found in Kenya 2%, Tanzania 1% and Madagascar 1%. The scale still in favor of girls in Botswana and South Africa with 3% more for girls, Swaziland with 4% more for girls and Lesotho with 10% more for girls (ACW, 2007: 10).

Available data on the percentage of female-headed household women and access to and control over resources such as land, credit facilities, power control based on patriarchal norms is of critical importance. For the period 1991 to 1995, Ghana has 32% female-headed households, 26% in South Africa and 23% in Uganda and Mauritania. Population of countries living below national poverty line or 1 US \$ per day shows that 10 countries have over 50% of the population living below the poverty line. Guinea Bissau taking the lead with population of over 87%, Zambia 84.6%, Sierra Leone 75%, Madagascar 72%, Gambia 64%, Niger 61.5%, Senegal 54% while Kenya, Lesotho and Uganda have 50% of population living below poverty line. What is alarming about the figure is that if women constitute majority of the world's poor, one wonder where women are in a country where three quarter live seldom below poverty line (ACW, 2007: 6).

NEPAD document (NEPAD, 2001: 126-131) rightly identifies development and health are intrinsically interrelated without a certain level of economic and social development, the population cannot be provided with basic health care. Østergard (1992: 110) observation underscores the importance of women's health as integral to development. Kate-Kalala (1999: 3) observes that poverty is the world's most serious carrier of ill-health – poor women suffer from poor health and a high incidence of maternal deaths. Østergard establishes a correlation between empowerment with basic cognitive skills and health and self-reliant human beings. Østergard (1992: 118) further notes that mother's education enhances the probability of child survival. Thus, to raise health standards, we must raise education level. NEPAD policy therefore requires an holistic approach to address the problem of poverty, education and health. This is

integral to development and women empowerment.

### **Economic position of women in Africa and NEPAD**

Women's contribution to the economic sector, more importantly to household and national development does not appear in the existing sources that have tended to consider formal sector as the only existing arena of economic activity. The World Bank reports 60% of female activities in developing countries are not counted in the System of National Account (SNA) while only 24% of male activities are left out. Hence, their work tends not to be considered in a regular and systematic manner in public nor budgetary allocation. Women as a percentage of adult labor force shows that for most countries, women are well represented in the formal labor force where they represents about 50% of the workforce. Similarly, the share of earned income in the formal sector varies between 19% (for Algeria) and 24% (for Malawi).

As regards women and economic power, the data reveal that women are present in the labor force but at the lower echelons. Number of female administrators and managers shows that in about one-third of the countries, female representation stands at below 10%. Eight countries have between 11 and 20% while 6 Countries have about 20%, Lesotho is second highest with 33% while Botswana stands highest with 36% (ACW, 2007). Women carry 13% higher than men's share of the workload and in the rural areas 20% higher than men's (ACW, 2007: 16). Most of the works go unrecognized and unvalued. Data produced by the Danish International Development (DANIDA) in four villages in Tanzania shows that 25% of women working hours (total 14 h) was devoted to farm work, 28% to food preparation 8% to washing and cleaning, 8% to collecting water and firewood, 2% to childcare, 15% to other activities and only 14% to resting. Women have remained responsible for domestic work and maintaining their household while expansion in school enrolment has increase their workload as access to the labor of older children became seasonal (Lugalla, 1995: 4).

Women's access to loans and credit facilities for agricultural improvement has been constrained by their inability to own land. Most female heads of household lack power and control over the land they work and this is worsened by the fact that the existing rural credit policies are also blind to the existing discriminatory systems. A recent study by the WB estimated that women in SSA produce up to 80% of all staple food but own less than 10% of the land. In another study on the world economic crisis and its impact on women it was further estimated that women in this region contribute up to 30% of labor in ploughing, 50% of labor in planting, 60% in weeding, 85% of labor in processing and preserving food while performing up to 95% of all domestic chores. In effect throughout rural African women's labor input is estimated

to be three times that of men (UN-NGLS, 2007: 2). Despite the fact that women contribute tremendously to agriculture production they constitute a small minority of formal employees in this sector. In a study in Tanzania (1989) for instance showed that only 47 women were employed in the agricultural sector in the Ministry's Head Office, compared with 80 men. All these employees, not a single woman was a Principal Agricultural Officer. In Namibia only 4.45% of women compared to 20.77% of the total labor force in the agricultural sector. (UN-NGLS, 2007: 3). Studies have shown socio-cultural barriers inhibit male extension officers in providing technical advice to female farmers. Extension services have been bias in favor of male farmers a factor which explains main biases in the sector's technologies.

Education is a prerequisite for the establishment of other development goals. Most developing countries, like Nigeria, agenda and programs of women development particularly women education is often marred by lack of the application of three fundamental parameters of planning, executing, monitoring and evaluation activities. Hence, NEPAD policy must synergize in its program and actions in reducing educational disparities. Women disproportionate burden of poverty and landlessness that permeates developing societies, any improvements in their role and status through education can impact on breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and inadequate schooling. Increasing women's education not only increases their productivity on the farm and the factory but also results in greater labour force participation, later marriage, lower fertility and greatly improved child health and nutrition. (Adebisi 2004: 125-126). African women and girls are lying fallow and their education jettisoned and a critical loss to harnessing the available human potential for full development.

### **Political position of women in Africa and NEPAD**

Women constitute a minority in policy-making bodies and government. Women Member of Parliament has scarcely exceeded 10%. This trend explains why most states have not made factual development in the laws they inherited from the pre-colonial patriarchal structures and those introduced by colonial patriarchy rule, which favored men such laws include those related to issues of property rights, marriage, and child custody. The Beijing Platform for Action recommends 30% representation of political position. Available data on women in decision-making show discrepancies in access to resources of education and power sharing. Only 4 countries have between 20 to 30% and Seychelles has 25% female access to resources of education and power (ACW, 2007). This same scenario with representation of women in government whereby 36 countries have less than 10% women (ACW, 2007: 19). In 10 countries have between 10 and 20% women in government. What is striking is

that in the case of women's representation in parliament and government, the countries relatively progressive in women's access to decision making are not necessarily the giants in terms of GDP, GNP in terms of performance in education, economic activity or in access to basic health services. Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Ethiopia, Angola and Chad have made a very commendable effort in enabling women's access to power sharing. Similarly, in countries emerging from scourge of conflict for example Eritrea, South Africa, Uganda and Rwanda and more recently Liberia where a woman emerged as the country first female president, it seems women have found it easier to make their way into decision making structures.

Mansaray (2004: 94) argues that women have a key role to play in ensuring good governance because they could bring new and different perspectives to politics. Policies and programs must also be responsive to the gender imperative. Further promoting the full implementation of the Beijing Conference remain central to the gender equality agenda at national, regional and international levels. NEPAD policy must expand political participation of women through its democracy and good governance initiative to further women representation in decision-making positions.

### **Conclusion**

There is need to reposition NEPAD from its current liberal framework to a feminist political economy framework. This approach addresses women problems in a way rooted in the historical complexities of African society. It is imperative for NEPAD policy to truly address women problem in a way responsive to the needs and circumstances of the people. Hence, for NEPAD to meaningfully address the problem of disempowerment it must be a product of people in the design and tailored to suit the plight of African women in contrast to being a product of African elites and tailored along western diagnostic prescription. NEPAD therefore, must be endogenous, people – centered, pro-poor, inclusive of popular participation, in a way that women can reproduce themselves while not injuring the chances of future generation to meet their needs.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study reveals that NEPAD policy document as it is has not critically address women problem in Africa. If women comprise a greater proportion of African population, development policy designed to chart the course of African development in the 21st century must be inclusive of the perspectives, needs, yearning and aspirations of this segment of the society. There is need for NEPAD policy to create avenue for women to participate fully in the planning and implementation process. No true

democracy can be attained without being inclusive and participatory. Hence, women are to be integrated into key decision-making positions that are strategic to access key resources critical to empowerment and participation. NEPAD policy promoters should seek synergy between its policy and program of actions. The program outlined for action under education for instance do not reflect the strategy the policy seeks to achieve the goal of reducing gender disparity in educational enrolment by two-thirds by the year 2015. Concrete strategies and program of actions must be linked to the stated objectives on education to achieve the goal of reducing gender disparity in education. In addition, the economic roles and contribution of women especially in the informal sector should be properly integrated into system of national accounting and budgeting allocation made to cater for the needs in this sector. Efforts should be directed to expand the informal sector where majority of women in Africa operate. This will go along way to boost productivity and increase income generating opportunities that not only expand national wealth but also improve the standard of living of majority of people who are poor in Africa. Since women contribution to agricultural production is significant, technology in this sector must be gender sensitive, socio-cultural barriers to women's access should be shed for necessary progress. Hence, agricultural policy must ensure women's access to critical knowledge and inputs which would help them improve their productivity, women access to resource necessary to carry out agricultural production is also essential. For NEPAD policy to be responsive to the plight and condition of women in Africa, women must be integrated into policy design and implementation process so as to be relevant to their needs and aspirations of the poor women in Africa. The problem encountered by women in different aspects of life must be integrated in shaping the policy output. Therefore, NEPAD policy must shift from the top-down approach to a bottom-up approach to be truly inclusive and facilitative in social transformation. The poor women should play a crucial role in both policy formulations and implementation. The overall, NEPAD policy should therefore gear towards gender equity that promotes wider life outcomes requiring transformative change.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author acknowledges Dr. Dung Pam Sha of the University of Jos, Nigeria who supervised her M Sc dissertation from which this work is derived. Sincere appreciation goes to the anonymous reviewer whose comments help to improve the quality of this work. Final responsibility remains, however, with the author.

## REFERENCES

Abbot P, Wallace C (1997). An introduction to sociology feminist

- perspective, Second (ed) London: Routledge, pp. 1-630.
- ACW (2007). Status of Women in Africa. Available at [http://www.neca.org/eca\\_resources/cdroms/status\\_of\\_africa\\_women/pages/datapages.htm](http://www.neca.org/eca_resources/cdroms/status_of_africa_women/pages/datapages.htm) accessed February 9
- Adebiyi M (2004). "NEPAD and the African debt crisis" In: NEPAD for Journalist Lagos: Nigerian institute of international affairs (NIIA), pp. 74-86.
- Agwu F (2004). "NEPAD and the G8: The politics of conditionalities". In : NEPAD for journalist. Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), pp. 17 – 40.
- Akinrinade S (2003). "The New partnership for Africa's development: Dispensing with the Begging Bowl or plus can change, plus c'est la ineme chose?" In: E Obadare and D Oyewole (eds.) The New partnership for Africa's development (NEPAD): challenges and development. Lagos: Centre for Development and Democracy (CDD), pp. 1-28.
- Boserup E (1970). Women role in economic development. England: Gower Publishing Company Ltd., pp. 1-370
- Bryson J (1981). "Women and agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa: Complication for Development (An Explanatory Study)" In: N Nelson (ed.), African women in the development process. London: Franklans and Company Limited, pp. 29-46.
- Bryson V (1992). Feminist political theory. An introduction. London: Macmillan Press Ltd., p. 304.
- Butegwa F (2002). Popularizing NEPAD among women in Africa. Available at <http://www.unesco.org/women/NEPADbutegwa.htm>. accessed on June 11, 2006.
- Calvert P, Calvert S (2001). Politics and society in the third world. Second (ed), England: Longman, pp. 234-246
- Crompton R, Hantrais L, Walters P (1990). "Gender relations and employment". Br. J. Sociol., 41(3): 330 – 347.
- Eisenstein ZR (1979). "Developing a theory of capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism" In: Capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism. New York: Monthly review press, pp. 5 - 40.
- Galadima H (2003). The impact of NEPAD on ECOWAS development strategy. A lecture presented at combat arms training week, Bauchi at the Armoured corps centre and school Bauchi, 25 September, 2004.
- Hartsock N (1979). Feminist thought and development of revolutionary strategy In: ZR Eisenstein (ed.) Capitalist patriarchy. Ibid pp. 56 – 77.
- Ige T (2002). NEPAD and African women: mechanism for engagement. Available at <http://www.unesco.org/women/NEPAD/tokumbo.htm> accessed on June 11, 2006.
- Keohane N, Gelpi B (1982). "Forward" In: N Keohane, M Rosaldo and B Gelpi (eds.) feminist theory a critique of ideology. Sussex: The Harvester Press, pp. 7 – 12.
- Khan S (2000). "The women's movement revisited areas of concern for the future" In: S Ali, K Coate, W Wagoro (eds.). Cultural feminist politics identifies in a changing world. London: Routledge, pp. 5- 10.
- Litho P (2005). ICTs, empowerment and women in rural Uganda: a scot perspective a paper presented at the "to think is to experiment" SSMAC, Centre for Narrative Research, UEL, 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2005. Available at <http://www.vel.ac.uk/cnr/ICTs.htm> accessed on November 6, 2006.
- Longwe S (2002). Africa: gender and NEPAD. Available at <http://www.Africa.upenn.edu/urgentaction/apic-110402.htm> accessed on November 04.
- Lugalla LP (1995) "The Impact of structural adjustment policies on women and children's health in Tanzania" Rev. Afri. Pol. Econ., 22(63): 43-53.
- Mansaray KY (2004). "Achieving good governance: The role of women in policy making" In: B Onimode *et al* (eds) NEPAD: Yet another plan, initiative and new partnership in African development and governance strategies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century looking back to move forward. Essays in Honour of Adebayo at seventy, London: Zed Books Ltd, pp. 94-100.
- Morgan S, Heeks R, Arun S (2002). Women's ict based enterprise for development project Available at <http://www.womenICTenterprise> accessed on November 04.
- Muhibbu-din MO (2007). The politics of NEPAD and women empowerment in Africa. An Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, University of

- Jos., p. 160
- NEPAD (2002). Documents and Speeches background in the new partnership for Africa's development (NEPAD). Available at <http://www.au2002.gov-za/docs/background/nepad.htm>. accessed on December 22, 2004.
- Obi C (2001). "Some critical issues in women's political participation through economic empowerment" In: Women's political participation through economic empowerment. Lagos: OVC Nig. Ltd., pp. 1-14.
- Obi C (2002). Reconstructing Africa's development in the new millennium through NEPAD. Can African leaders deliver the goods? Available at [http://www.cordesria.org/Archives/galo/Abstracts%20GA201-5/continuity\\_Obi.htm](http://www.cordesria.org/Archives/galo/Abstracts%20GA201-5/continuity_Obi.htm) accessed November 14, 2006.
- Onimode B, Agubuzu LC, Ajakaiye O, Amaizo YE, Asiwaju AI, Duany JA, Kankwenda M, Mansaray KY, Obadan MI, Odediran O, Onuobogu E, Otober EE, Sunmonu HA, Tomori OW, Tomori SO (2004). NEPAD: Yet another plan, initiative and new partnership in African development and governance strategies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century looking back to move forward. Essays in Honour of Adebayo at seventy, London: Zed Books Ltd, pp. 231 – 255.
- Østergard L (1992) "Health" In: L Østergard (ed.) Gender and development a practical guide. London: Routledge, pp. 110-134.
- Randiamaro Z (2003) The NEPAD, gender and the poverty trap: the NEAPD and the challenges of financing for development in Africa from a gender perspective (gera). Available at [http://www.net/\\_icc at/Debtsap/nepadgera.htm](http://www.net/_icc at/Debtsap/nepadgera.htm) accessed on November 11.
- Stamp P (1989). Technology, gender and power in Africa, Ottawa, information development research centre. pp. 1-185
- Stanley L, Wise S (1993). Breaking out again feminist ontology and epistemology. New ed. London: Routledge, p. 253
- Tadesse Z (2002). In search of gender justice: can NEPAD deliver? Available at <http://www.gwsafrica.org/knowledge/tadesse.html> accessed on November 11, 2006.
- UN-NGLS (2007). Voices from Africa. Available at <http://www.un-nxls.org/documents/publications.en/voices.africa/number5/vfa5.07.htm> accessed on February 9, 2007.
- Whitehead A, Bloom H (1992). "Agriculture" In: L Østergard (ed.) Gender and development a practical guide. London: Routledge, pp. 41-57.
- Whitworth S (1997). Feminism and international relations towards a political economy of gender in interstate and non-governmental institutions. London: Macmillan Press Ltd., pp. 11-38
- William P (1997). "State, women and democratization in Africa: the Nigerian experience (1987-1993)" *Afri. Dev.*, 22(1): 141-182, 1997.
- Zulu B (2006). Gender and issue in ict policy formulation: lesson from Zambia. Available at [http:// www.Genderit.org.en/index.shtml?](http://www.Genderit.org.en/index.shtml?) accessed on October 30.