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Perspectives of Women/Girls in Pastoral Communities of the Northeast Region of Nigeria on Women Empowerment Initiatives.

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PREFACE

This policy brief is the third in the series of communication to policy and decision makers as well as other researchers on the on-going research project of the Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED) titled “Empowerment of Women in Pastoralism and Agriculture in Nigeria’s Sahel Region” funded by Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurring and protracted Crisis (SPARC) under its Advancing gender equality in fragile food systems in the African Sahel programme.

CPED’s policy brief series is designed to draw attention to key findings and their policy implications as projects are being executed. This edition presents explored local meaning and perceptions of women and men in pastoral communities of the Northeast region of Nigeria of the concept of women empowerment with a view to using such findings for intervention in the study area.

We are very grateful to SPARC and IDRC for the support in implementing this project. We are particularly grateful to the Officer in charge of our project, Dr. Pauline Njiriani for her support to CPED which has enabled the Centre to continue the implementation of the action research project and the publication of this policy brief. We also appreciate the cooperation of policymakers in Bauchi and Gombe States for their collaboration with CPED in the on-going implementation of the project.

Introduction

Pastoralism contributes significantly to national economies and can conserve fragile natural resources. It plays a role in nutritional, socio-economic and cultural needs of Nigerians, yet pastoralists remain socially and economically marginalized (Kipuri and Ridgewell, 2008; Hayatu *et al.*, 2018). Due to high transaction costs, a lack of formal markets, limited access to information, and inadequate credit options, many pastoralists are unable to fully realize the economic potential of their system (Hatfield and Davies, 2006). For women and girls in pastoral communities, these challenges are in two folds- that is, as pastoralists and as women. The challenges facing women in pastoral communities include lack of space to make their views heard, lack of awareness of their rights, inequality in accessing resources, social services, coupled with broader governance challenges and are disproportionately more likely to be negatively affected than men because of their general vulnerability as a discriminated against group (Kisambu *et al.*, 2017; Kipuri and Ridgewell, 2008)). Additionally, Pastoralist women endure harmful customs and have few available options to control productive assets such as livestock and land. The control of major sources of livelihood by men impacts negatively on economic power and income status and capacity of pastoral women.

Furthermore, a lot of cultural belief and rituals, with a particular emphasis on religion, make it hard for Pastoral Women to participate in big economic enterprises or pursue other more important aspirations such as leadership positions due to their lack of literacy. So, it can be inferred that pastoral

women are marginalized both within the pastoral societies and in the larger political leadership sphere. To ameliorate this exclusion, many have called for the Empowerment of Women. Women's empowerment has been seen as a means to give women who experience discrimination, oppression, and poverty the ability to take control over their lives by acting as an agent in terms of access to resources and improved social status. (Azaghamanai, 2020). Awareness of rights and abilities to act in the interests of others; access to education and employment opportunities; entrepreneurialism; greater confidence, self-respect, improved communication skills; participation in decision making are part of empowerment in developing countries. In some cases where women are financially independent, particularly in patriarchal cultures, Women Empowerment has been regarded as strategies such as careful negotiation with men and educating of children about the negative effects of gender inequities in a way that remains respectful of local norms and at the same time allows women to pursue their goals (Azaghamanai, 2020). Empowered women have also been described as someone who exhibits qualities that are perceived to help one achieve goals, takes actions to achieve goals, and works with others to achieve own goals or common goals (Abdu *et al.* 2023).

Given the difference in what people perceive as Women Empowerment and the fact that empowerment is context dependent, and that the nature of reality is associated with what participants view differently about their experiences (Moustakas, 1994), this study, therefore, explored local meaning and perceptions of women and men in pastoral communities of the Northeast region of

Nigeria of the concept of women empowerment with a view to using such findings for intervention in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on action research being implemented by Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED) with funding from International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, through the SPARC program to support women and girls in Pastoralism and Agro-pastoralism in Nigeria's Sahel region. This is a mixed study that combined both quantitative and qualitative technique in data collection in Bauchi and Gombe States of the Northeast region of Nigeria.

The data for this study is derived from life history interviews conducted with respondents in Gombe and Bauchi states. A total of 24 Life History Interviews were conducted in 6 local government areas in both project states (Gombe and Bauchi States). Those interviewed included one adult male and one adult female of age 60 years and older as well as one adolescent male and one adolescent female of age 18 to 24 years in each target LGA. Specifically, the adult participants of the life history survey in Gombe State were male 65 years in age and the female 63 years in age in Akko LGA, male 60 years in age and female 60 years in age in Billiri LGA, and male 73 years old and female 63 years old in Kaltungo LGA. The adolescent participants in the state were male 24 years old and female 18 years old in Akko LGA, male 24 years old and female 18 years old in Billiri LGA, and male 19 years and female 22 years old in Kaltungo LGA respectively. In Bauchi State, the adult participants of the life history

interview were male 68 years old, female 60 years old in Dass LGA; male 68 years old, female 60 years old in Tafawa Balewa LGA; and male 60 years old, female 60 years old in Kirfi LGA. Subsequently, the Adolescents who participated in the life history interview were male 24 years old, female 24 years old in Dass LGA; male 24 years old, female 20 years old in Tafawa Balewa LGA; and male 19 years old, female 18 years old in Kirfi LGA.

FINDINGS

Overall Perceptions of Women Empowerment

Women and men respondents perceive that women in pastoral communities can be empowered in several ways such as provision of livestock, reduction of unpaid care work, access to credit facilities, participation in decision making both at the household and community level, changes in social norms that promotes inequalities between men and women, security, and training on modern way of rearing livestock. They also suggested how these empowerment initiatives can be effectively carried out. These include involving community leaders, traditional leaders, religious leaders as well as women cooperatives.

Access to Credit facilities

Some of the respondents suggested that women should be empowered by giving them access to credit. They also suggested that this should be provided directly to the women to avoid hijacking of the funds. A respondent from Bauchi expressed:

*I think there are a lot of suggestions but most importantly is capital. Money needs to be given to the women in order to improve in their business or increase their livestock production. When these steps are taken, I know it will enhance development. During the implementation money should be given hand to hand...**Dass-Bauchi-Male-24yrs-Single-Livestock Production***

Another respondent highlighted the need for community leaders to be involved in the empowerment process. She expressed:

*Women are really into pastoralism and need to be empowered to enhance women development. There is the need to get community leaders involved in the process. They know the people that really need help and they will make sure to give what is given to the women. **Dass-Bauchi-Female-60years-Married-Livestock Production.***

Another Female respondent further underscored the importance of empowering women through access to credit. She noted:

*Women in Garin Alkali community in Akko LGA should be engaged as pastoralists to enhance their development. Engaging into farming or as pastoralist will enable them to generate their own income thereby assisting the men in taking care of their needs as well as that of the family. Moreover, there is need for government to empower and support women who are into farming and pastoralists by giving loans (in form of money or facilities) or providing them with the adequate facilities they needed...**Akko-gombe-female-18years-married-trader.***

Aside those who are already carrying out economic activities, there is the need to support women who are not doing so this was illustrated as:

*There is also need for government to empower women who are not into any business or work and then support those that are already into it. **Kaltungo-gombe-female-22years-single-bussiness.***

Some respondents also brought out the benefits of empowering women. It was stated that:

*When women are into pastoralist and farming, they will generate income and also assist the men in taking care of the family's needs. In order to achieve this, women should be well empowered as government should give loans and supports to them. Moreover, they should collaborate with the community leaders/religious leaders' in rendering the supports. **Akko-gombe-female-63years-married-bussiness woman.***

Provision of Livestock/other inputs

Some of the respondents were of the opinion that women in pastoral communities can be empowered if they are provided with livestock that will boost their production. A livestock producer noted:

I want to suggest to the organization that they should involve the traditional and church leaders in reaching those that are qualify for the empowerment and those that will not misuse whatever amount or anything they get for the empowerment,

and I suggest that livestock should be provided to the women not money and this will enhance women development. And please don't involve the Government or politician in empowering women in this community...Dass-Bauchi-Male-68years-Married-Farmer and Livestock Producer

Another respondent added that women can be empowered if livestock are provided directly to them. He noted:

I want to suggest to the organization that they should empower the women by themselves, and I suggest that livestock should be provided to the women...Kirfi-Bauchi-Male- 60years-Married-Farmer

Another respondent summarised:

If you want to truly measure women empowerment, give them opportunities, encourage them, support them with capital, input, animal, infrastructures. The little knowledge and effort they have putting in place will be enhanced...Akko-gombe-male-65years-married-farmer.

Reduction of Unpaid Housework

Some respondents opined that Women can be empowered when the burden of unpaid housework is reduced when the men share in the household work.

Women and disadvantaged group should be included in economic participation and men should assist them in their unpaid care burden. Women working condition needs to be improved in all aspects of life.. Kirfi-bauchi-female-60years-married-livestock producer.

A male respondent added that reduction of unpaid housework will also be of benefit to the male folk as it will provide the women with more time to carry out task with economic value. He stated:

By addressing the longstanding inequalities experienced by women, strengthening their resilience, and allowing them to participate in economic activities, you are reducing their unpaid care burden. To some extent we are also relieving ourselves of some of our responsibilities. Marriage will turn be a "joint venture" if we accept to empower our wives because they are known to be care givers. If they can have the opportunity, they definitely help us... Akko-gombe-male-65years-married-farmer.

Participation in Decision making /Leadership.

Some respondents perceive the participation of Women in Decision making and leadership as a form of Empowerment:

Enhancing women participation, decision making and leadership in the community will bring more development to the community and the society at large. And also securing women life in pastoral community will enhance development and reduce poverty among women. Kirfi-bauchi-female-60years-married-livestock producer.

Women should be given equal opportunities as men in every aspect of

life. And also, they are supposed to be part of decision making in the home because they will impact positively to the household and the society. I think some social norms need to be violated so that women will be fully engaged in the society. **Kirfi-Bauchi-Male- 60years-Married-Farmer**

There is need for women to be productive financially and also be involved in leadership and decision making. There shouldn't be gender biased when it comes to productivity in women and also social norms shouldn't prevent women from having their rights. Community leaders with the government should work on engaging women in building productive assets like land, finance and infrastructural services that will enhance their development. **Kaltunga-gombe-female-22years-single-bussiness**

Changing of social norms that promote inequalities between male and female.

Changing of norms that negates equality was also regarded as an Empowerment initiative for women.

I think some social norms need to be adjusted for women to be fully involved in the development of the society or community... **Kirfi-Bauchi- female-60years-married-livestock producer.**

I think some social norms need to be adjusted for women to be fully involved in the development of the society or

community... **Tafawa Balewa-Bauchi-male-24years-single-farmer**

Women should be allowed to fully participate in agriculture and as pastoralists, in informal economy, and also improve their working conditions and means of livelihoods. **Akko-Gombe-female-18years-married-trader.**

Problems of gender inequalities should stop as well as social norms that prevent women from having their due rights. In order to achieve this, government in collaboration with other stakeholders in the community should work effortlessly infrastructural services that will enhance their development in the community thereby reducing the burdens they have and over dependence on men. **Akko-Gombe-female-18years-married-trader.**

There is need to address the long standing inequalities experienced by women in some communities in Kaltungo LGA. This is because women are far left behind in terms of pastoralism and farming and needed to be carried along. This can be done by strengthening the participation of women in economic productivity, improve their working conditions, their engagements in farming and pastoralists, leadership and decision making. This in turn will enhance their development and also the community. Therefore, involvement of stake holders in the community towards women's engagement as pastoralists will be of benefit to the development of agro-pastoral communities. **Kaltunga-gombe-female-63years-widow-food vendor**

Although, women are now into some productive activities, but more has to be done to support them. The perception and stigmatization to women that engage in some business activities should be wiped out in the community. More awareness and enlightenment should be done.
Katunga-Gombe-male-73years-married-farmer.

Security

Security of Women and girls in pastoral communities is of serious concern as the women are sometimes exposed to the risk of rape, adoption, or death while the males go out with their livestock to graze as the excerpt below reveals.

securing women life in pastoral community will enhance development and reduce poverty among women...Kirfi-bauchi-
female-60years-married-livestock producer.

Training on modern method of rearing livestock

Another way to empower women in pastoral communities is through training as the extracts below depict.

how to truly measure women are empowered in pastoralism is to visit them through the leaders in the community and you will have to know the level of their understanding on how to raise livestock in a modern way in the community to enhance development....Tafawa Balewa-

Bauchi-female- 60years- married-livestock producer.

Women should be trained and be assisted directly because sometimes, husbands take advantage of being the household head and misappropriate loans and grant given to their wives.
Billiri-Gombe-male-60years-married-farming.

Identify women involved into keeping of domestic animals, train and empower them through grants and loans. This will have a multiplier effect in the development of not only women but the entire community.
Kaltunga-Gombe-male-19years-student and farmer

We have a lot of pastoralist women in this community. I suggest that they should be trained and empowered. Animal should be given to women cooperatives so that it can reach out to the women. This can be done in collaboration with the traditional rulers so that registered women association can be verified. When this is done, women can be empowered, and this will enhance community development.
Katunga-Gombe-male-73years-married-farmer.

Women empowerments enhance women development but engaging women in our community is not easy. You have to follow through religious leaders, community leaders and other top personnel to convince their husbands on the importance of women empowerment.
Akko-Gombe-male-24 years-single-farmer and animal husbandry

RECOMMENDATION

Considering the two-fold marginalization that women in pastoral communities are exposed to, there is need for them to be empowered. This can be achieved through the provision of credit facilities, livestock, and training of Women on modern technologies in livestock rearing. There is also the need to change social norms that promote inequalities and make unpaid housework burdensome for women. This can be done through sensitization and awareness campaigns that target the Women, Men, community as well as religious leaders. There is also the need to train women to have increased confidence and self-worth as this will make them recognize their power within (self) and the power with(group) that is required to effect change.

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