

WOMEN EDUCATION AND THE PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Augustine Nnoruka Okeke

Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Federal Polytechnic Oko, Anambra State

E-mail: augustinennorukaoke@yahoo.com

Abstract

The paper takes a cursory look at the role of women education in promoting sustainable tourism and sustainable development. It highlights among others the inestimable benefits of education, how women have fared in acquiring education, and how societies view women education. The paper also highlights certain cultural and socioeconomic issues that prevent women from having adequate access to education, and examines women's role in promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. It concludes that although the level of female education in Nigeria has improved, much is still needed to improve female education in Nigeria, in the area of policies and programs with measurable results. It advocates that efforts should be made to ensure that education is made accessible to low-income families and rural populations, and recommends among others that government at various levels should put in place laws and policies that will help females to acquire formal education of their choice in the country and defend their rights and privileges.

Keywords: Women education, sustainable tourism, sustainable development.

Introduction

To educate a woman is to educate a whole nation. The importance of women's empowerment through education is recognized internationally in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. It specifies the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the international community's commitment to be achieved by 2030, in which Goal 5 is 'to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. It also clearly indicates that these endeavours would make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals.

It is widely agreed that education and training are important to the achievement of sustainable tourism and sustainable development (UNESCO, 1996). Education is the spring board for advancement and empowerment of women in different areas of human endeavour. Education is the greatest investment that should be given to women in order to empower them to fulfil their roles and participate effectively in national development. Empowerment of women with education in Nigeria is the foundation of all other forms of empowerment. With the rapid technological advancement which the world is now witnessing and the continuous transformation of the world economics through globalization, there is a greater pressure than before on national governments to develop efficient educational systems to meet development needs of the 21st century.

Tourism is a major income for many developing countries, provide employment which have helped turn around many local economy. Establishing educational training programmes that will empower women to acquire skills that would be beneficial to hospitality

and tourism sector will enhance the development of woman capital in the area.

The government could create various vocational educational programme and skill acquisition centre that would produce professional in tourism industry.

The educational programme could be targeted to produce women entrepreneurs in tourism destination in the host communities. One of the goals of sustainable tourism development is to encourage the host community participate and benefit in the dividend of tourism small scale business in their community.

Benefits of education:

The benefits of education can never be overestimated. Education drives economic growth by boosting productivity. Education is vital for the economic prosperity of a nation. Education enables people to improve their social, cultural and economic situation and strengthens sustainable development. Education is often regarded globally as a potent instrument for introducing and sustaining social change in human societies as well as sharpening destiny. Education serves as a vehicle for enhancing upward social and economic mobility.

Education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such since the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. A positive correlation exists between the enrolment of girls in primary school and the gross national product and increase of life expectancy.

Because of this correlation, enrolment in schools represents the largest component of the investment in human capital in any society. Rapid socio-economic development of a nation has been observed to depend on the calibre of women and their education in that country. Education bestows on women a disposition for a lifelong acquisition of knowledge, values, attitudes, competence and skills.

Education should be an intrinsic part of any strategy to address the gender-based discrimination against women and girls that remains prevalent in our society. According to the U.S. Agency for International Development and the World Bank, 57 percent of the 72 million primary school aged children who do not attend school are females. Additionally, girls are four percent less likely than boys to complete primary schools (Gender statistics, 2010).

While many gains have been made with regards to overall level of education worldwide and more children than ever are now attending primary school (King, 2013), there is still not world-wide gender parity in education. In every income bracket, there are more female children than male children who are not attending school. Generally, girls in the poorest 20 percent of household have the lowest chance of getting an education (Jensen, 2010). This inequality does not necessarily change in adulthood.

Statistics show that of the 774 million illiterate adults worldwide, 64 percent are women – a statistic virtually unchanged from the early 1990s (Gender Statistics, 2010). The United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to promote gender equality and empower women therefore uses education as its target and the measure of gender disparity in education as its indicator of progress. Through the efforts of the international community, the UN hopes to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Nigeria is still among the nations facing many challenges in reaching that target by 2015 as well as bridging gender gap in primary and secondary education. It is imperative to say that education plays a particularly important role as a foundation for girls' development towards adult life. At the time ensuring gender equality requires adapting equally to the needs and interests of girls and boys.

International human rights law lays down a three-fold set of criteria where by girls should have an equal right to education, equal right in education and their equal rights should be protected and promoted through education (Tomasevski, 2005).

According to OECD paper 'Sustainable development can only be achieved through long-term investments in economic, human and environmental capital. At present, the female half of the world's human capital is undervalued and underutilised the world over. As a group, women – and their potential contributions to economic advances, social progress and environmental protection – have been marginalised. Better use of the world's female population could increase economic growth, reduce poverty, enhance

societal well-being, and help ensure sustainable development in all countries.

Role of education in promoting sustainable tourism

Education is vital for promoting sustainable Tourism. There is a vital need to educate the indigenous people of various cultural heritage and tourism sites in their own language and official languages for the sake of foreign tourists that may not understand local languages.

Education will make them to understand better, the role of tourism in sustaining structural and economic development of their region. Education bridges communication gap between indigenous people and foreign tourists. It also enables rural people to understand that the presence of foreigners is to their economic and social well-being. Ecotourism is also promoted through indigenous education (Basi, N. D.).

Women and education

Educating men and women is key to economic growth and sustainable development in any nation. Raising the education levels and literacy rates of women is one of the most effective investments for increasing female productivity as well as enhancing the well-being of families and children. In developing countries, reducing gender inequality in literacy and in primary and secondary education is essential to reducing poverty and accelerating economic development. More women are now getting university degrees than men. In many OECD countries, well over half of all university degrees are being awarded to women. On average 33% of women aged 25-34 have tertiary education compared with 28% of men the same age. The gender gap in favour of women is greatest in countries such as Canada, Finland and Sweden. In countries including Japan and Korea, men are receiving university degrees at a higher rate than women, but females are catching up. In the OECD area, women are now more highly educated than ever, increasing both their opportunities for employment and earning power. On average, tertiary education substantially increases lifetime earnings and is a good investment for individuals and society as a whole. However, this tends to be less true for women. A main reason is the difference in the subjects that young men and women study at university. Women prefer health and welfare subjects with humanities, arts and education a close second. For male graduates, subjects related to engineering, manufacturing and construction come first, just ahead of mathematics and computer science. Women thus end up in female-dominated fields characterised by lower status and less well-paid jobs.

In non-OECD countries, investment in the education of girls reduces birth rates and lowers infant and child mortality rates. Primary education for women increases their labour force participation and earnings and also fosters educational investment in children. But more than two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women. While more young girls are receiving primary education in even the poorest parts of the world, very few receive secondary and tertiary education (World Bank, 2006). This makes it likely that the third Millennium Development Goal "to promote gender equality and empower women" will not be attained since it is measured by the elimination of gender disparity in all levels of education by 2015.

This implies that educating females is essential to increasing productivity in all economies, particularly in the developing world where it depends in large part on engendered development assistance policies.

UN World Survey on "the Role of Women in Development 2014", as female education levels rise, infant and child mortality rates fall and family health improves. Education also increases women's participation in the labour force and their contributions to household and national income. Women's increased earning capacity, in turn, has a positive effect on children's nutrition, health and educational prospects.

Women education and the society

The tradition, customs, socio cultural values, ethics, motherhood instincts are some of the factors influencing gender bias in the education sector. Cultural and social beliefs, attitudes and practices prevent girls from benefiting from educational opportunities to the same extent as boys. The achievement of girls' right to education can address some of societies' deeply rooted inequalities, which condemn millions of girls to a life without quality education – and, therefore, also all too often to a life of missed opportunities. Education is seen in some societies as a fear of change and now with globalization, the fear becomes even greater- fear to lose the cultural identity, fear of moving towards the unknown or unwanted.

Furthermore, the gender disparity is exacerbated by the powerful economic and social rationale for investing in the education of sons rather than daughters, as daughters are perceived to be less valuable once educated, and less likely to abide by the will of the father, brother or husband. The plight of women, in terms of education is compounded by this negative attitude of parents toward female education (Oniye, 2010).

Another implication for poor education opportunity for women is involvement in low paying ventures. It has

been noted by Oladunni (1999) that because of societal stereotype and stigmatization on certain professions and subjects as the exclusive preserve of men and or women most Nigerian women have been forced into less paid jobs (teaching, nursing services, agriculture, small scale food processing, secretariat duties, clerical duties, note- counting in banks, cleaners and middle level professional occupations).

There are various cultural and socioeconomic issues that prevent women from having adequate access to education which includes:

Culture, values and tradition: Various cultural and social values have historically contributed to gender disparity in education. According Denga (1993), one prominent cultural view is that it is better for the woman to stay home and learn to tend to her family instead of attending school. The Nigerian society (both historical and contemporary) has been dotted with peculiar cultural practices that are potently hurtful to women's emancipation, such as early/forced marriage, wife-inheritance and widowhood practices, Nmadu, T. (2000).

Cost of Education: Because of the high cost of education, many parents can only afford to send few of their sons to school while leaving their daughters behind at home.

Educating rural women as a panacea to development
Transformative change cannot be achieved with new policies and strategies alone; it also requires awareness raising and capacity building. Eradicating illiteracy among rural women should remain a top priority and, in many cases, this requires a reform of the current education system. Adequate educational programs for rural women are imperative for their full participation in development initiatives, and the programs need to be accessible and relevant to the cultural contexts in which women live. Appropriate information-sharing systems need to be developed, as well as pedagogical tools and educational, advocacy and counselling centres. In addition, continuous training should help women access modern technology and provide guidance on agricultural production. When provided in certain contexts where local culture is a barrier to change, awareness raising and gender equity training programs for men and women could enhance mutual understanding and enable a shift in mentality towards (and within) rural women.(IISD paper,2014)

Women role in promoting sustainable development in Nigeria

According to Emmanuel, Elizabeth, Esther (2014), there are various ways through which women can

contribute to the development of the nation. Based on some of the special qualities possessed by women, a lot can be benefited from them if given the opportunity to be educated. Some of the benefits that can be derived from women education towards a sustainable development are:

- **Quality Leadership:** According to the report of Shinaba (2008) abuse of power, violations of human rights, mismanagement of national resources and under development are the order of the day for the past four decades that men have been in power. Similarly, the period in which men have been in power have been characterized by gross inequality and violence. However, as managers of the home, it is expected that if women are given the opportunity, they will be able to implement their managerial skills in the management of the various sectors of the economy. The quality of leadership that will be provided by women will be such that would be characterized with equality, peace, transparency and protection of human right. All of these qualities are very important in building a stable nation.
- **Increase in GDP:** The World Bank in White (2013) pointed out that if the gap between male and female employment is closed, it would help to increase GDP in America by 9%, Europe by 13% and Japan by 16%. When women are given the opportunity to be educated, it will help to increase the workforce of the nation.
- Similarly, the activities of women in the various economic sectors of the economy have the potential of contributing to an increased GDP. This is because their contribution will help to argument the effort of their male counterpart in securing a higher GDP.
- **Building of a Healthy Nation:** The health condition of the citizens is one of the factors that determine the lifespan of the masses. In the same way, the lifespan of the citizens is one of the factors that determine the level of development. Orji (2011) noted that girl education vis-à-vis women education stands as one of the potent tools for reducing girls' vulnerability. A healthy nation has also being linked to a wealthy nation. Similarly Kingdon (2002) noted that doubling the female secondary school enrolment ratio from 19% to 38% in 1975 helped to reduce infant deaths in 1985 by 64%. The education of women is therefore closely related to raising a healthy generation that would be empowered to contribute significantly to national development. Women in the society are

usually known for their cleanliness and have the capacity of building a healthy nation.

- **Reduced Dependency Rate:** The education of women is one of the ways of reducing the level of dependency in the nation. The empowerment of women through education will assist in reducing the pressure on economic resources in the country. This will help to sustain the economic resources in the country towards the path of development. Similarly, empowering women through education would also enable them to become self-sufficient individuals. They would be equipped to learn and develop various means by which they can meet up with personal and societal needs. This will help to reduce the pressure on national resources and also reduce dependency level on their sponsors.
- **Resource Management:** Women all over the world are known to be better managers than their male counterpart. The prudent management of resources helps to reduce wastage and increase economic benefit from available resources. When women are properly educated, it helps them to put their managerial skill into use and help manage national economic resources for the benefit of all. It is therefore advisable that women should be empowered through formal education on how they can harness their management abilities for the long term benefit of all citizens in the country.

Ways to improve the education of women in Nigeria

Various educational stakeholders have continued to re-iterate the need to improve on women education in the country as a way of empowering women in the society. The education of women has been linked to have a positive relationship with national development. It is therefore needful that women education be given the needed attention in the society. Some of the ways through which women education can be improved in the country include the following:

Ensuring Gender Equality in Admission Process: According to occupational statistics provided by Wikipedia (2013) female workers in some identified professions were as follow: architects 2.4%, quantity surveyors 3.5%, lawyers/jurists 25.4%, lecturers 11.8%, obstetricians and gynaecologists 8.4%, paediatricians 33.3%, and media practitioners 18.3%. This is an indication that the method of admission into various courses in most of the nation's higher institutions is gender sensitive. Most of the tertiary institutions in the country reserve some courses basically for the men against their female

counterparts. Some of these courses are areas where women can either perform better or compete favourably with their male counterpart. As a way of improving women education in the country, more women need to be given equal opportunity during admission to study courses of their choices. The method of admission in higher institutions should be gender friendly and give women the opportunity to acquire higher education in a course and institution of their choice.

Provision of Educational Grants: Although all persons interested in acquiring formal education in the country should be given the opportunity to do so, however, more female students should be given educational grants as a way of encouraging them to further their education to higher levels. In the face of the disparity that already exists in the ratio of boys to girls in most of the educational systems in the country, more female students should be provided with financial support as a way of bridging the differences in education at all levels. Female students can be provided with educational grants that will help them complete their education or provided with financial encouragement in the form of stipends that will assist them to study comfortably in any institution of their choice. This will help to increase the interest of more women to acquire formal education just like their male counterpart.

Proper Legislation: The level of disparity between the male and female child has been in existence for so long. Various authors have identified the fact that the African tradition naturally places more importance to the male child than the female child. However, Nasir (2002) also noted that the inability of women to acquire education and contribute to the independence of Nigeria also contributes to the slow progress of women education. It is therefore necessary that proper policies be formulated and implemented that will protect the female child from cultural and contemporary beliefs. The various arms of government should be ready to stand up and defend the rights of women when such right is being eroded and abused. When appropriate laws are put in place, it will go a long way in overcoming all barriers that limit the girl child from acquiring quality education just like other citizens in the country.

Employment of Quality Female Teachers: One of the ways of encouraging more women to acquire formal education is by providing a sufficient number of female teachers in most of the schools across the country. Majority of the schools in the country are occupied by male teachers who may not understand or give the

needed attention for the female child to excel in school. Similarly, there are increasing cases of female students being sexually harassed by their male teachers. Most female students need female teachers who would serve as role models to them in the school system. It is therefore needful that more female teachers be employed in the various educational levels in the country so as to encourage the female child to demand for and willingly acquire formal education at the various levels.

Provision of Appropriate Infrastructures: Women education in the country is so sensitive that it requires the provision of appropriate facilities for it to succeed. Male students are naturally wired to succeed under pressure in meeting life goals including that of education. This case is not so with women. Women require a well-organized environment for them to learn effectively. According to OECD DAC (2004) infrastructures for women education should be able to achieve the following:

- Increase women's economic opportunities
- Provide appropriate services to women.
- Actively involve and empower women.
- Encourage women to take up decision making and leadership roles.
- Improve girls and women's access to education and health care.
- Eliminate discrimination against girls and women.

It is through the provision of quality infrastructures that the essence of women education can be achieved. These infrastructures will help women to learn meaningfully and also put the knowledge acquired into productive use. Improving access to and the quality of education is the most rewarding investment a country can make. Investing in female education will accelerate Nigeria's economic and social development by enhancing human capital, slowing population growth, and alleviating poverty. According to Agbakwuru (2002) education equips one with marketable skills thereby lifting the possessor up from the poverty arena. Essentially, through education, the individual learns good health habits, principles and practices which promote healthy living and longevity as well as acquire marketable skills that confer economic power on the educated.

Conclusion

Although the level of female education has improved in Nigeria, efforts to improve female education in Nigeria are still needed and should involve policies and programs with measurable results. Also, efforts to ensure that education is made accessible to low-income families and rural populations, with special attention and sensitivity to women/girls is paramount if

family stability and in turn national development is desirable in Nigeria. Evidence has shown that education is a sine qua non to women's advancement which should not be denied anyone.

Recommendations

On this note, we recommend that:

1. Security should be beefed up around places of learning such as secondary schools, this will help to reduce the rate of kidnaping especially of girls, and remove fear from them.
2. Government at various levels should put in place laws and policies that will help females to acquire formal education of their choice in the country and defend their rights and privileges. (Eseyin E.O, Okafor E. U, Uchendu E. E, 2014).
3. Appropriate human, financial and material resources should be provided to support women education in the country. These resources will help to provide a comfortable environment for women to study and contribute effectively to self and national development. (Eseyin et al)
4. Various educational stakeholders should also be encouraged to contribute meaningfully to support women education in the country. The private sector, parents and school management should provide enabling environment for women to acquire quality education for sustainable development. This could be introduced as part of their corporate social responsibility to the society. (Eseyin et al)
5. Both the policy makers and school administrators need to promote the principle of equality between women and men in school curricula, educational programs and teaching activities. In order to realize the above stated the steps highlighted below are necessary:
 - introduce the issue of gender equality in teachers' training programs;
 - include information and knowledge about the family, gender equality, duties of women and men in the family and shared responsibility of all family members for its proper functioning in sexual education programs.
 - ensure that women who dropped out of school because of family responsibilities are provided with opportunity to complete their education;
 - ensure full and equal participation of girls and women in extracurricular activities and school facilities, such as computer or vocational classes, or business management training;
 - ensure equal access, for girls and boys, to physical activities, recreational and sport classes, run both at and outside of school (Okorie U.A, 2013)

References

- Agbakwuru, C. (2002). 'The role of primary education in the promotion of national integration and cohesion'. *Knowledge Review* 1(2), 15-23.
- Basil, (N. D.) .The Importance of Education in Tourism development and sustainment. FTMS magazine.
- Dekens, J. and Voora, V. (2014) '*Rural Women, Partner in the Development Process*' International Institute for Sustainable Development
- Denga, D.I. (1993). *Education at a glance: From cradle to tomb*. Calabar: Rapid Educational Publishers Ltd.
- Eseyin E.O, Okafor E. U, Uchendu E.E,(2014). 'Women Education and Sustainable Economic Development, *Nigeria' Journal of Education and Practice* Vol.5, No.16, 2014 .www.iiste.org
- Gender statistics (2010).United States Agency for International Development. Retrieved from http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/wid_stats.html on September 19, 2013.
- Jensen, L. (2010). Millennium development goals report. Accessed online at http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2010/MDG_Report_2010_En.pdf on September 19, 2013.
- Nmadu, T. (2000). "On Our Feet: Women in Grassroot Development", *Journal of Women in Academics*, Vol. 1 No 1, Sept. 2000, JOWACS Pp. 165-171.
- Nussbaum, Martha (2003) "Women's Education: A Global Challenge" Sign: *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2003, vol. 29, no. 2 Pp 325 - 355.
- OECD paper, 'Gender And Sustainable Development: Maximising The Economic, Social And Environmental Role Of Women'.
- Ogakwu, V. N. and Isife, T. C. (2016). 'Women Education and Sustainable Development: A Panacea for Peace Building in South East Nigeria'. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Volume 21, Issue 11 Ver. 1
- Ogakwu V.N. (2012): Untapped Economic Contributions of Women to National Development and Sustainability, A Public Relation Challenge, *Academic Scholarship Journal*, 5(1), 34-46.
- Ogakwu V.N. Cultural Barriers to Gender Equity in Nigeria: An Obstacle for Achieving Education for All, *Multi disciplinary Journal of Academic Excellence*, 6(1), 11-21.

- Okorie U.A (2013), 'Women education in Nigeria: problems and implications for family role and stability'. *European Scientific Journal* Vol.9, No.28
- Onyido, J.A. (2011) The educated women: An evaluation. *The Nigerian Journal of Research and Production*, 18(1), 2011, 11-15.
- Schultz, T.P. (2002). "Why Governments should Invest More to Educate Girls" *World Development*, Vol. 30 No.2 Pp 207 - 225.
- Todaro, M and Smith, S. (2011) *Economic Development*, Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited
- Tomasevski, K. (2005). Not Education for All, Only for Those Who Can Pay: The World Bank's Model for Financing Primary Education. *Law, Social Justice & Global Development Journal* (LGD) 1. Accessed online at <http://www.go.warwick.ac.uk/elj/lgd/2005_1/tomasevski> on September 20, 2013.
- UNESCO/UNEP (1996). Education for Sustainable Development: A priority for the world community. UNESCO-UNEP Environmental education newsletter, Vol. XXI, No. 2, June 1996.
- World Bank (2006), 'Gender Equality as Smart Economics'.