

First Thing First, Arguing the Case for the Inclusion of Women in Energy Decision Making Process towards Achieving Sustainable Rural Development in Practice: The Nigerian case

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Abstract

With increasing globalization, a major concern affecting the quality of life and productivity in rural areas is the issue of available and affordable modern energy service. Nigerian women are specifically at the receiving end of this issue as they are responsible for providing food for the family while relying on energy for household tasks as well as productive/commercial activities. However, the substandard quality fuel used by these women contributes to socio-economic problems caused by environmental degradation, increased workload, ill health, etc. In spite of these burdens energy policies and strategies are perceived to be gender-neutral. Nigerian rural women, therefore, continue to be under-represented in the decision-making process. Premised on existing studies, this paper investigates the disparities faced by rural women in the energy decision-making process in Nigeria. Guided by the feminist legal method, an approach founded on women's experience of exclusion and postulated by renowned feminist scholars (Katharine T. Bartlett, Patricia A. Cain, Martha Albertson Fineman, etc.); the paper makes a case for the inclusion of rural women in the energy decision-making process in Nigeria. Hence, it argues that making gender analysis the first step and an integral part of decision-making process can bring about sustainable energy laws, policies, as well as practices that address the socio-economic challenges experienced by rural women in Nigeria. Findings reveal, first, "No data, no visibility; no visibility, no interest." Second, international framework namely, the United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPFA) recognizes that achieving sustainable development requires for the national government to treat men and women equally as well as analyze and integrate the practice, experience and standpoint of rural women in the decision-making processes. Third, giving rural women a voice in energy decision-making can aid in shaping the contents of energy policies and strategies that can translate into sustainable rural development and ultimately national economic growth. Perhaps, the reason why various energy programmes created by the Federal Government of Nigeria are yet to bring about visible developmental changes is because there are no gender analytic tools adopted by energy decision-makers. Fourth, not integrating the perspective of rural women into energy decision-making process implies that any progress towards attaining "sustainable development will remain incomplete." The paper, therefore, makes a case for the adoption and utilization of a gender analysis tool by the Nigerian government as the first step to formulating energy policies and strategies that are inclusive of rural women's energy concern. Notwithstanding, there are obstacles to adopting a gender analysis tool.

Keywords: Sustainable Rural Development, Nigeria, Inclusion of Women

Introduction

Sustainable, accessible and affordable modern energy service is a primary issue affecting rural development, productivity, and quality of life in rural areas; with increasing globalization, the situation gets worse. Nigerian women are specifically at the receiving end of this issue as they are responsible for providing food for the family while relying on energy for household tasks as well as productive/commercial activities. However, the substandard quality fuel used by these women contributes to socio-economic problems caused by environmental degradation, increased workload, ill health, etc. In spite of these burdens energy policies and strategies are perceived to be gender-neutral.¹ Nigerian rural women, therefore, continue to be under-represented in the energy decision-making process.² In investigating existing disparities confronted by rural women, the paper's goal is to make a case for the inclusion of rural women in the energy decision-making process in Nigeria. Guided by the feminist legal method, an approach founded on women's experience of exclusion³ and postulated by renowned feminist scholars (Katharine T. Bartlett, Patricia A. Cain, Martha Albertson Fineman etc.); the paper argues for the adoption of a gender analysis tool. It further argues that, making gender analysis the first step and an integral part of decision-making process can bring about sustainable energy laws, policies, as well as practices that address the socio-economic challenges experienced by rural women in Nigeria.

Through the optic of feminists' scholars, I begin this paper by exploring the theoretical foundation on gender disparities and gender analysis tool (GAT). Part II introduces rural women focusing on why energy is a woman's issue. In part III, I show how and why rural women should be integrated into energy decision-making processes. I thereafter examine the international framework(s) supporting the adoption and utilization of GAT after which I conclude.

1. Part I: Theoretical Foundation: Through a Feminist Optic

1.1 Exploring the Feminist Legal Method

Gender inequality is a term commonly used by feminists to deconstruct any form of discrimination and domination experienced by women. They perceive the current patriarchal society as reflective of a hierarchical structure that dominates and relegates the viewpoint of women to the background.⁴ Furthermore, they are of the view that decision-making processes have misrepresented, silenced and disadvantaged women by excluding their experiences.⁵ In this regard, feminist scholars as a group deal with the past and present exploitation confronted by women with the aim of seeking ways of empowering women and

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¹Joy Clancy, Sheila Oparaocha, and Ulrike Roehr, "Gender Equity and Renewable energies," (International Conference for Renewable Energies, Bonn, (2004): 3.

²Chike Chikwendu, "Engendering Nigerian Energy Policy," in *Where Energy is Women's Business: National and Regional Reports from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific*, ed. Gail Karlsson (Leusden: Energia International Network on Gender & Sustainable Energy, 2007) 57.

³ Katherine T. Bartlett, "Feminist Legal Methods," *Harvard Law Review* 103, no. 4 (1990): 829.

⁴Patricia Smith, Introduction to *Feminist Jurisprudence*, ed. Patricia Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3. See also, Robin West, "Jurisprudence and Gender," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 55, no. 1 (1988): 60 (However, Robin West argues that the use of the term feminist jurisprudence is a mis-normal. She claims that the proper concept should be feminist legal theory).

⁵ Bartlett, "Feminist Legal Methods," 834. See also, Smith, *Feminist Jurisprudence*, 3.

transforming a male dominated institution.⁶ According to Gordon, feminism is about analysing women's experience of "subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it."⁷ That is to say, feminists analyse the law to unmask various ways in which the law has "privileged" men at the expense of women. In corroborating this view, Cain states that:

Uncovering the ways in which law has privileged male over female is the immediate goal of much feminist legal writing. Listening to women is an essential step in this project.⁸

From the above, it is safe to state that the aim of the feminist legal thinkers is first, to deconstruct the law to show that the notion that it's gender-neutral, objective, consistent, dispassionate and rational⁹ is a myth and not a reality. Second, to investigate the law from the standpoint of women¹⁰ so as to expose subordination and imposed inferiority.¹¹ It is against this backdrop that feminist legal theorists have adopted methodological tools known as "feminist legal method (FLM)." Thus, the FLM is an approach founded on women's experience of exclusion.¹² It aids integrate women's practical life experience¹³ into legal analysis¹⁴ and decision-making processes. In the words of McClain, "Feminist jurisprudence has sought to bring the experience and voice of women to the jurisprudential enterprise..."¹⁵

⁶ Martha Albertson Fineman, "Feminist Legal Theory," *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & The Law* 13, no. 1 (2005): 14.

⁷Linda Gordon, "The Struggle for Reproductive Freedom: Three Stages of Feminism," in *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, ed. Zillah R. Eisenstein (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), PDF e-book, 107.

⁸Patricia A. Cain, "Feminist Legal Scholarship," *IOWA Law Review* 77, (1991): 20, accessed May 1, 2016, <http://digitalcommons.law.scu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1277&context=facpubs>.

⁹ Steven Vago and Adie Nelson, *Law & Society* (Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004), 56.

¹⁰ In this context, rural women

¹¹ Catharine A. Mackinnon, *Towards A Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 241.

¹² Bartlett, "Feminist Legal Methods," 829.

¹³ This includes women's poor socio-economic conditions

¹⁴ Lydia A. Clougherty, "Feminist Legal Methods and the First Amendment Defense to Sexual Harassment Liability," *Nebraska Law Review* 75, (1996): 21, accessed May 1, 2016, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1533&context=nlr>.

¹⁵Linda C. McClain, "Atomistic Man" Revisited: Liberalism, Connection, and Feminist Jurisprudence," *Southern California Law Review* 65, (1992): 1174, accessed May 1, 2016, <http://heinonline.org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/HOL/Page?public=false&handle=hein.journals/scal65&page=1171&collection=journals>.

The FLM comprise of 3 main elements¹⁶ namely: “asking the woman question”, “feminist practical reasoning” and “consciousness-raising.”¹⁷

In rationalizing and defining these elements, Clougherty, drawing from Bartlett, clearly explains the ways in which feminist legal theorists utilize the FLM. On “asking the woman question” which this paper describes as an investigative tool, Clougherty notes that feminists use this method to unmask any form of bias implicitly made against women in decision-making process even where such process appears to be gender-neutral.¹⁸ By employing this tool, feminists investigate decision-making processes to see if they will impact on women’s lives in the real world.¹⁹ To justify this tool, feminists’ have raised important questions namely: “What would the law be like if women had been considered by drafters and interpreters of the law?”²⁰ “How can future policy-making be informed by the excluded voices and perspectives of those at the bottom of the political, economic, or patriarchal social hierarchy?”²¹ Where the response to the above “woman questions” suggests any form of bias, this will mean that decision-making processes are indeed gender-bias and need to be transformed.

Concerning “feminist practical reasoning,” which this paper describes as a corrective²² and an integrative tool it focuses on women’s reality. This tool can be used by decision-makers to: 1) review existing laws, 2) take into consideration “issues that negatively affects women,” and 3) acknowledge and incorporate the standpoint of women that may be revealed by consciousness-raising (which I explain below) during decision-making processes.²³ “Consciousness-raising”, which this paper describes as an assessment tool, can be used by decision-makers in practice to identify the impact of decision-making processes on women. The objective of this tool²⁴ is to give decision-makers 1) the opportunity to hear women tell their life stories (in this case, energy-related) as it hurt, and 2) the ability to eliminate any form of bias made against women or capable of rendering a

¹⁶ This paper intends to be guided by these three elements. For the fourth approach offered by Katharine Bartlett - positionality, see Bartlett, “Feminist Legal Methods.”

¹⁷The debate as to whether these elements are methods or methodologies goes beyond the scope of this paper. For such debates see, Sandra Harding, “Is There A Feminist Method,” in *Feminism and Methodology*, accessed July 23, 2016, <http://rzukausk.home.mruni.eu/wp-content/uploads/harding.pdf>.

¹⁸ Clougherty, “Feminist Legal Methods and the First Amendment,” 6. See also Bartlett, “Feminist Legal Methods,” 837.

¹⁹ Clougherty, “Feminist Legal Methods and the First Amendment,” at 7.

²⁰Janet E. Ainsworth, “In a Different Register: The Pragmatics of Powerlessness in Police Interrogation.” *The Yale Law Journal* 103, (1993): 262, accessed May 1, 2016, <http://heinonline.org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/HOL/Page?public=false&handle=hein.journals/ylr103&page=259&collection=journals>.

²¹ Sharon K. Hom, “Female Infanticide in China: The Human Rights Specter and Thoughts Toward (An)Other Vision,” *Columbia Human Right Law Review* 23, (1992): 274. **Hom, Sharon K.** “Female Infanticide in China: The Human Rights Specter and Thoughts Toward (An)Other Vision.” *Columbia Human Right Law Review* 23, (1992): 274.

²² Clougherty, “Feminist Legal Methods and the First Amendment,” 10 (Feminist practical reasoning can be used to correct bias made against women during decision-making processes).

²³ Clougherty, “Feminist Legal Methods and the First Amendment,” 6, 9.

²⁴ Consciousness-raising

decision-making process gender-bias.²⁵ In summarising the rationale behind these methodological tools, Fineman points out that they represent the integration of theory and practice.²⁶ This suggests that where these tools which have the same characteristics as GAT are successfully realized and utilized, it can serve as a framework for the formulation of decision-making processes that may be considered in practice as gender-neutral

In contributing to the above, feminist historian, Schiebinger opines that it is not enough to understand the making of science rather, what is needed is to develop and adopt more constructive and practical ways *to employ gender analysis tools*. Achieving this will bring about a “sustainable science.” Furthermore, “only when gender analysis becomes an integral part of science research programs will the problem of women in science be solved.”²⁷ From the above it is safe to state that the adoption of mechanisms such as GAT has long been recognised by feminists. Drawing from Schiebinger, it is the opinion of this writer that a decision making process can also be described as a science. Going by this line of reasoning, this means that where decision-makers employ a gender analysis mechanism as an integral part of energy decision-making process, this can significantly contribute to addressing the perennial socio-economic challenges faced by rural women in Nigeria.²⁸

Consequently, feminists are of a common view that: 1) analysing women’s experience in decision-making processes and nothing less is required to ensure that their interest and concerns are included before decisions are passed,²⁹ 2) civilization and society have put women in a subordinated position to and by men,³⁰ and 3) if women are included in societal activities “life would be better, certainly for women...”³¹ The paper proceeds to introduce rural women while focusing on why energy is a woman’s issue.

2.0 Introducing Rural Women: Why Energy is a Woman’s Issue

Affordable access to modern and sustainable energy service is necessary for human well-being and a key component to attaining sustainable development. This implies that a sustainable energy system can bring about fundamental change to a nation’s environmental, social and economic development. However, one major challenge to attaining sustainable

²⁵ Bartlett, “Feminist Legal Methods,” 863-864. See *also*, Clougherty, “Feminist Legal Methods and the First Amendment,” 8, 9.

²⁶ Fineman, “Feminist Legal Theory,” 14.

²⁷ Londa Schiebinger, “Creating Sustainable Science,” *Women, Gender & Science: New Directions* 12, (1997): 203.

²⁸ Uchenna Ijoma, “Decision-Making Process Towards Achieving Environmental Sustainability: Giving Rural Women a voice in Mitigating the Unintended Consequences of Oil Exploration in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria” (presentation, Graduate Student Symposium on Law, Policy, and Indigenous Peoples, University of Saskatchewan, Canada, May 6-7, 2016).

²⁹ Ann C. Scales, “Towards a Feminist Jurisprudence,” *Indiana Law Journal* 56, (1981): 376, accessed May 1, 2016, <http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3542&context=ilj>.

³⁰ Clare Dalton, “Where We Stand: Observations on the Situation of Feminist Legal Thought,” *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice* 3, (2013): 2, accessed May 1, 2016, <http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=bglj>.

³¹ *Ibid*, 2.

development in Nigeria will be to find ways to operationalize it.³² In the context of this paper, operationalizing sustainable development begins with recognizing that: 1) energy is the magnet that holds other sustainable development goals, 2) energy is foundational to achieving sustainable rural development, and 3) rural women are at the receiving end of energy issues and their ability to access sustainable energy will bring about transformation to their well-being and rural development.³³

As documented by the 2006 national census, women in Nigeria account for 52 percent of the total population of which 45 percent live in rural communities.³⁴ Rural women in Nigeria generally play an important role in energy production, use and management as they are saddled with the responsibility of accessing and satisfying the daily energy needs of their family and community. As a result, “they experience energy poverty differently and more severely than men.”³⁵ Although, rural women are presumed to be mostly involved in the activities of the informal sector,³⁶ their contribution to the country’s economic growth cannot be overstated. Their activities revolve around home management,³⁷ food producing, subsistence farming,³⁸ and entrepreneurs.³⁹ Since most of their time is spent in the forest on a daily basis sourcing for water, fuel,⁴⁰ carrying out agricultural activities and making use of natural products for medicinal and economic purposes they have a relationship with their natural environment.⁴¹

³²John C. Dernbach, “Achieving Sustainable Development: The Centrality and Multiple Facets of Integrated Decisionmaking,” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal studies* 10, (2003): 247.

³³Senay Habtezion, “Gender and Energy,” United Nations Development Programme, (2012): 2 accessed accessed May 1, 2016, http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/PB3_Africa_Gender-and-Energy.pdf (This includes time and energy labour saving ie. household labour and productive activities).

³⁴ Adam Gambo Saleh and Fatima Ibrahim Lasisi, “Information Needs and Information Seeking Behavior of Rural Women in Borno State, Nigeria,” *Library Philosophy & Practice* (2011), accessed May 1, 2016, <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/saleh-lasisi2.htm>. See also, World Bank, “Rural Population (% of Total Population),” last modified 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS>.

³⁵Katrine Denielsen, Executive Summary to *Gender Equality, Women’s Rights and Access to Energy Services: An Inspiration Paper in the Run-Up to Rio + 20* (s.l: Ministry of Foreign of Denmark, 2012), iv.

³⁶ This is so because rural women spend a lot of their time on unpaid family activities. In addition, since these women are usually not educated they sometimes take up menial jobs were they are paid little or nothing.

³⁷ Rural Women engage in unpaid tasks which include: care giving, cooking, cleaning, washing, raising children, voluntary community services, gathering and carrying firewood as well as fetching water.

³⁸Elizabeth Cecelski, “Energy and Rural Women’s Work: Crisis, Response and Policy Alternatives,” *International Labour Review* 126, no.1 (1987): 44.

³⁹ Rural women are involved in food processing etc. (for example, fish smoking, palm oil, garri and rice production etc.)

⁴⁰ Mainly derived from traditional biomass eg. firewood, agriculture waste and animal waste

⁴¹Uchenna Ijoma, “Giving Women a Voice in the Decision Making Process Toward Achieving Environmental Sustainability: The Case of Oil Drilling in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria,” (presentation, Oxford Symposium on Population, Migration and the environment, Wadham College, Oxford, UK, March 21-22, 2016).

To address home management activities, rural women need improved access to energy services within households to satisfy basic human needs such as: pumping drinking water, washing, cooking, boiling water, lighting, heating⁴² and for the preparation of traditional medicines (usually used in place of a conventional health care system).⁴³ As noted by Cecelski, two activities that are mostly time-consuming for rural women are cooking and collecting firewood.⁴⁴ Likewise, Barnett and Whiteside assert that the time devoted by rural women to carry out these activities⁴⁵ is usually linked with the poverty level of most households.⁴⁶ These views Adenugba and Raji-Mustapha corroborate by showing that in most rural households in Nigeria, women spend a minimum of two hours each day collecting firewood.⁴⁷ For instance, 86 percent of women interviewed in Tofa local government area of Kano State, Nigeria are reported to spend time using crop waste and firewood as their main source of energy while 55 per cent of these women depends on other energy sources such as kerosene, charcoal, etc.⁴⁸ To this end, Warren points out that ongoing developmental projects fail to address women's issues which include: their need for an alternative method of cooking and as a result they have no choice but to use low-quality fuel thus, increasing the time spent for cooking.⁴⁹

Concerning agricultural activities, in 2011, a report of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reveals that over 50 percent of Nigerian women contribute to agricultural activities⁵⁰ which include: farming, forestry and fishing.⁵¹ Also, 80 percent of food items

⁴² United Nations Development Programme, *Gender & Energy for Sustainable Development: A Toolkit and Resource Guide* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2004), 11. PDF e-book.

⁴³ Ijoma, "Giving Women a Voice."

⁴⁴ Cecelski, "Energy and Rural Women's Work," 44.

⁴⁵ Such activities include, gathering fuelwood and water, housework, cooking, child care etc.

⁴⁶ T. Barnett, and A. Whiteside, "Poverty and HIV/AIDS: Impact, Coping, and Mitigation Policy," (2002), quoted in Mark Blackden and *Quentin Wodon, Gender, Time Use, and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa World Bank Working Paper* NO. 73 (Washington: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank, 2005), 19.

⁴⁷ Adenugba, A.O and Raji-Mustapha N.O, "The Role of Women in Promoting Agricultural Productivity and Developing Skills for Improved Quality of Life in Rural Areas," *IOSR Journal of Engineering* 3, (2013): 53, accessed May 5, 2016, http://www.iosrjen.org/Papers/vol3_issue8%20%28part-5%29/H03855158.pdf.

⁴⁸ Nuratu Mohammed and B. Oyeniyi, "Role of Rural Women in Household Energy Management in Tofa L.G.A of Kano State," *Social Science & Humanities* 3, no. 3 (2012): 420, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.3%283%29/2012%283.3-48%29.pdf> (More so, converting fuelwood into charcoal is time-consuming).

⁴⁹ Karen Warren, "Toward An Ecofeminist Ethic," *Studies in the Humanities* 15, (1988): 143, accessed May 1, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1312032520/fulltextPDF/66BF787825E743D9PQ/1?accountid=14701>.

⁵⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture Closing the Gender Gap for Development* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2011), PDF e-book, 11.

⁵¹ United Nations, *Niger Delta Human Development Report* (Abuja: United Nations Development Programme, 2006), PDF e-book, 5 (For instance, the FAO reveals in 2014 that Nigeria is rated as first with almost 2 million people engaged in fishery activities).

consumed in Nigeria are produced by rural women.⁵² As entrepreneurs, women primarily control fishing and agricultural activities which they produce, process, distribute and market to end users.⁵³ However, due to the substandard quality fuel available to them they continue to engage in primitive agriculture⁵⁴ and food processing methods and as a result, they spend back-breaking hours carrying out these activities. For example, existing studies show that while rural women in Nigeria spend 540mins/day in agricultural activities, their male folks spend 420mins/day.⁵⁵ Although, it has been proven that modern and efficient energy mechanized graters lead to the reduction of time needed to grate garri from one day to 15 minutes, the inability of rural women in Nigeria to afford to own such an equipment results to socio-economic loss.⁵⁶ In this regard, Cecelski argues that many labour-saving technologies have not only failed to save the time and energy of women, but they have also been able to worsen their social and economic conditions.⁵⁷ This, feminists describe as the “feminization of poverty.”⁵⁸

Warren asserts that feminist issues which by its definition is synonymous to women’s issues means any act that presents an understanding of women’s experience of exclusion.⁵⁹ She perceives gender disparity, domestic chores such as cooking, gathering and carrying firewood, fetching water, glass ceiling and burning charcoal as women’s issues.⁶⁰ What does this imply for rural women? Where rural women continue to use biomass resources as their primary source of energy they remain confronted with harsh realities of social, economic, environmental and health impact and as a result their potentials to pursue a quality life that is free and fulfilling becomes limited. The following sub-section(s) further investigates women’s issues to expose resulting socio-economic consequences with the aim of advocating for a transformation.

2.1 Social Consequences and the Role of Energy

⁵² Adenugba and Raji-Mustapha, “The Role of Women in Promoting Agricultural Productivity,” 51.

⁵³ Ijoma, “Giving Women a Voice,” 10.

⁵⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization, “Energy for Agriculture,” in *The Energy and Agriculture Nexus* (Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization, 2000), <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x8054e/x8054e05.htm>.

⁵⁵ Aslihan Kes and Hema Swaminathan, “Gender & Time Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa,” in *Gender, Time Use, and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa World Bank Working Paper* NO. 73, ed. Mark Blackden and Quentin Wodon (Washington: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank, 2005), 18.

⁵⁶ World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and International Fund for Agricultural Development, *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*, (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank), PDF e-book, 294.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Cecelski, *The Role of Women in Sustainable Energy Development* (Colorado: National Renewable Energy Laboratory, 2000), 27.

⁵⁸ Carolyn E. Sachs, *Women Working in the Environment* (Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 3. See also, Sylvia Chant, “Rethinking the “Feminization of Poverty” in Relation to Aggregate Gender Indices,” *Journal of Human Development* 7, no. 2 (2006): 202, accessed May 5, 2016, <https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/92076/original/rethinking%2Bfeminization%2Bof%2Bpoverty.pdf> (The term feminization of poverty describes and suggests that women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world poor. This implies that despite rural women’s contribution to Nigeria’s economic growth they remain the poorest resulting into their exclusion).

⁵⁹ Warren, “Towards AN Ecofeminist Ethics,” 142.

⁶⁰ Warren, “Towards AN Ecofeminist Ethics,” 142.

The stark reality is that where rural women are confronted with lack of access to sustainable energy services, it can bring about social exclusion which in turn can impede their ability to contribute fully to the development of rural economy.⁶¹ Social exclusion includes rural women's inability to access basic amenities that are necessary to reducing drudgery, poverty, hunger etc such as: portable water, education, maternity/health care system, a healthy environment, autonomy and dignity.⁶² Social exclusion leads to lack of self-confident, a productive and meaningful life.

Regarding portable water, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) report finds that access to safe and portable water is a major problem in Nigeria.⁶³ As part of rural women's gender roles, they are responsible for accessing and boiling water which requires energy services. In most cases, they have to trek far distance to satisfy domestic and commercial water supply. For example, the UNICEF report shows that compared to 33 percent in the urban communities 69 percent of the rural communities lack access to safe drinking water.⁶⁴ Also, data from the National Bureau of Statistics shows that water in rural areas is gotten from unhealthy sources like wells, rivers or lakes⁶⁵ leading to various water-related diseases.⁶⁶ This means that apart from the time spent by rural women sourcing water, they are also confronted with increased burdens of child health care and morbidity related to water-borne disease. By integrating women into energy policies and interventions, they can become skilled to easily access safe and portable water. This can help reduce women's drudgery while allowing them to participate in other productive activities.

With respect to education, many women and girl-children do not have the basic literacy because of their roles as gatherers and carriers of fuelwood and water. As a result, they are relegated to the background when men which feminist describe as the ruling class make decisions.⁶⁷ This is in line with a study carried out by the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, which finding reveals that gender disparity between boys and girls participation in education exists because 1) the male gender is regarded as superior, and 2) females' experience of subordination.⁶⁸ This position has been reaffirmed by African leaders (including Nigeria) at

⁶¹ UN, *Niger Delta*, 6. See also, Nigeria National Planning Commission, *Meeting Everyone's Needs: National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy* (Washington D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 2004), PDF e-book, 10.

⁶² Shauna MacKinnon, "Poverty and Social Exclusion: Solving Complex Issues through Comprehensive Approaches," CCPA Review Economic & Social Trend (2008), accessed May, 5, 2016, http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba_Pubs/2008/Poverty_and_Social_Exclusion.pdf.

⁶³ United Nations Children Funds, "Water and Sanitation Summary Sheet: Nigeria," (2008): 1 http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/ng_media_Water_sanitation_summary_sheet.pdf.

⁶⁴United Nations Children Funds, "Information Sheet: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Nigeria," (2007), http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO_Nigeria_Factsheets_WASH.pdf.

⁶⁵ Ijoma, "Giving Women a Voice," 14.

⁶⁶ Such as cholera, dysentery, and diarrhoea

⁶⁷ Dorothy E. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: a Feminist Sociology* (Boston: North-eastern University Press, 1987), 51.. See also, Ijoma, "Giving Women a Voice."

⁶⁸Charles B.U. Uwakwe, Ajibola O. Falaye, Benedict O. Emunemu, and Omobola Adelere, "Impact of Decentralization and Privatization on the Quality of Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Nigerian Experience," *European Journal of Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (2008): 165-166.

the Pan-African Conference on the education of girls held at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.⁶⁹ Also, in 2011, a World Bank report on Nigeria records that most women are engaged in agricultural activities and as a result, fewer females are enrolled in schools compared to their male counterparts.⁷⁰ Where modern and reliable energy is lacking, attracting teachers to rural communities become difficult and women's security becomes uncertain. For instance, due to unavailable access to energy,⁷¹ on the night of April 14, 2014, 276 female students were abducted from a government secondary school in the village of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria by members of Islamic terrorist known as Boko Haram.⁷² This experience will remain devastating for the girls involved.

Health wise, women experience disparities as a result of food and waterborne diseases as well as indoor air pollution. Scarcity in traditional biomass can cause women to cook at best, once a day. In other cases they survive on partially cooked meals or leftover food. Where water is boiled and food is cooked, it has its health benefit particularly for growing children who need a number of nutrients contained in cooked meals.⁷³ The reverse implies malnutrition and other diseases which can contribute to child mortality. For example, a 2015 United Nations report shows that 36.5 percent of Nigerian children under the age of 5 suffer from malnutrition. This can be said to be high when compared to countries like Senegal having a percentage of 19.2 and South Africa 23.9 respectively.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO) documents that smoke from indoors inefficient cooking stoves fueled by agricultural crop waste, wood, charcoal, and animal dung kills over 4 million people in the world every year.⁷⁵ In the case of Nigeria, over 98,000 women⁷⁶ and 85,000 children (under the age 5)⁷⁷ are reported to die yearly. More so, gathering and carrying

⁶⁹UNESCO and UNICEF, *The Education of Girls the Ouagadougou Declaration and Framework for Action: Pan-African Conference on the Education of Girls* (Ouagadougou: UNESCO and UNICEF, 1993), PDF e-book, 4-5 (At this conference, the Ouagadougou Declaration was adopted. Leaders recognized that Africa, with particular reference to Nigeria, is lagging behind other regions of the world in female literacy and enrolment).

⁷⁰World Bank, "Reproductive Health at a Glance: Nigeria," *World Bank*, 2011, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPRH/Resources/376374-1303736328719/Nigeria42211web.pdf>.

⁷¹ In this case electricity.

⁷² "Nigeria Says 219 Girls in Boko Haram Still Missing," FoxNews World, last modified June 23, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/06/23/nigeria-says-21-girls-in-boko-haram-kidnapping-still-missing.html>.

⁷³Irene Dankeman and Joan Davidson, *Women and Environment in the Third World: Alliance for the Future* (London: Earthscan Publication Limited, 1998), 71.

⁷⁴ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development*, (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2015), PDF e-book, 254.

⁷⁵World Health Organization, "Household Air Pollution and Health," last modified February, 2016, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs292/en/> (The WHO report shows that children and women are affected disproportionately as they suffer diseases such as lung cancer, pneumonia, stroke and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder which in most cases cost them their lives).

⁷⁶RUWES Nigeria, "The Renewable Energy Programme Office, Federal Ministry of Environment of Nigeria," (Submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on the Lima Work Programme on Gender, 2015).

⁷⁷ Gwenaelle, Legros, Ines Havet, Nigel Bruce and Sophie Bonjour, *The Energy Access Situation in Developing Countries: A review Focusing on the Least Developed Countries and Sub-Saharan Africa* (New York: UNDP & WHO, 2009), 54

firewood is a physical draining chore that causes rural women to suffer spinal damage leading to problems with childbearing.⁷⁸ Despite this health experiences, most health care systems in the rural areas lack necessary electricity to make them functional. Due to lack of access to electricity in health care centres medical practitioners are not attracted to rural communities⁷⁹ and as a result, rural women continue to face poor maternal health conditions.⁸⁰

Rural women are also at the receiving end of all forms of environmental degradation due to the poor energy system. Apart from the fact that the use of agricultural and animal waste negatively impacts land fertility, some authors have argued that the use of traditional biomass such as firewood and charcoal leads to deforestation, desertification, loss of habitat, biodiversity and climate change.⁸¹ Arguing differently, Dankelman and Davidson assert that rural women cannot be responsible for deforestation because the woods they gather and use as energy are dead branches usually found on the ground.⁸² However, Agarwal notes that in certain occasions, women have had to cut green branches. According to her, this occurs where a conflict arises between preservation of the environment and human-related survival; particularly were children who cannot withhold hunger are involved.⁸³

2.2 Economic Consequences and the Role of Energy

With increasing globalization where the world's economic growth is driven by energy, the consequences and impact of lack of access to reliable, affordable and sustainable energy will be tragic and directly felt by more women particularly those in the rural communities. In the rural communities for economic growth, energy is needed for mechanical powered agriculture, irrigation, community services and commercial enterprise.⁸⁴ It is also required for agro-processing, storage and transportation.⁸⁵ In Nigeria, 77 percent of households are headed by women⁸⁶ and these women play a significant role in the rural economy of a developing nation like Nigeria. For example, in 2009, small-scale subsistence

⁷⁸ Dankelman and Davidson, *Women and Environment in the Third World*, 69.

⁷⁹ UN, *Niger Delta*, 32.

⁸⁰ On the 10th of July, 2016 during the Nigeria Channels T.V (10:00pm) news one of the residence of the Obayantor community in Edo State, Nigeria while appealing to the government for an adequate health care system reported that a lot of their women die during child birth.

⁸¹ ECREEE and National Renewable Energy Laboratory, *Situation Analysis of Energy and Gender Issues in ECOWAS Member States 2015*, (Praia: ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency), PDF e-book, 14 (This in turn affects women who have a stake in the natural environment).

⁸² Dankelman and Davidson, *Women and Environment in the Third World*, 67.

⁸³ Bina Agarwal, "Conceptualising Environmental Collective Action: Why Gender Matters," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 24 (2000): 298.

⁸⁴ United Nations, *Rural Women in a Changing World: Opportunities and Challenges* (New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2008), PDF e-book, 30.

⁸⁵ FAO, "Energy for Agriculture."

⁸⁶ International Fund for Agriculture Development, *Country Programme Evaluation: Federal Republic of Nigeria*, (Rome: International Fund for Agriculture Development, 2009), PDF e-book, 8.

farming contributed 36.6 percent to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product.⁸⁷ This means that rural women contribute greatly to the nation's economic growth.⁸⁸ Integrating rural women's interest, needs and priorities in energy decision-making process is essential to empowering and facilitating their contribution to sustainable rural development and reduction of rural poverty. The current process of globalization namely, liberalization of international trade, commercialization of agriculture and markets for agricultural products has affected rural development.⁸⁹ Although, this form of development has brought gains to Nigeria's economy, it cannot be ignored that it has brought with it increasing challenges for women.

Where women's participation in energy decision-making process are not taken into consideration, "they continue to face serious challenges in effectively carrying out their multiple roles within their families and communities"⁹⁰ leading to exploitation and marginalization. Marginalization means excluding disadvantaged individuals (oppressed) from accessing economic resources or participating in social and other forms of societal activities that prevent them from exploring their potential in such a way that they feel fulfilled.⁹¹ It has been described by feminists as an unequal power relation between differing genders. Where women are marginalized, it is impossible for them to access resources that are necessary to implementing their perspective.⁹² In Nigeria rural women experience this form of marginalization as a result of lack of access to energy.

Prior to globalization, production activities in the agrarian sector were relatively minimal compared to the era of globalization. Since this was the case, power was mainly generated by non-mechanical devices, essentially, human and animal forces.⁹³ However, with the era of globalization, due to inaccessible mechanized food processors and provision for powered agricultural equipment, women continue to use hoe technology⁹⁴ to carry out their agricultural tasks.⁹⁵ Studies show that Nigerian women spend up to 2 to 3 hours every

⁸⁷ Ministry of Power Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policy (NREEEP) Approved by FEC for the Electricity Sector (s.l: Ministry of Power Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015), 18. See also, World Bank, "Agriculture, Value Added (% of GDP)," last modified 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS> (According to a recent World Bank report the agricultural sector contributes 20.2 percent to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product).

⁸⁸ As revealed by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2011.

⁸⁹ UN, *Rural Women in a Changing World*, 2.

⁹⁰ UN, *Rural Women in a Changing World*, 3.

⁹¹ Jane Jenson, "Thinking About Marginalization: What, Who and Why?," Canadian Policy Research Network Inc. (CPRN), (2000): 1, http://cprn3.library.carleton.ca/documents/15746_en.pdf.

⁹² Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought," *Common Grounds and Crossroads: Race, Ethnicity & Class in Women's Lives* 14, no. 4 (1989): 749, <https://diversedynamics.files.wordpress.com/2007/01/collins.pdf>.

⁹³ Gloria Thomas Emeagwali, "Women in Pre-capitalist Socio-Economic Formations in Nigeria," in *Women in Nigeria Today*, ed. S. Bappa, J.Ibrahim, A.M. Iman, F.J.A. Kamara, H. Mahdi, M.A. Modibbo, A.S. Mohammed, H. Mohammed, A.R. Mustapha, N. Perchonock, and R.I. Pittin (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1985), 53.

⁹⁴ Manual tools.

⁹⁵ For example, harvesting and weeding.

day threshing and pounding grains.⁹⁶ While, processing a drum of oil palm fruit requires 82 women per hour, women need 48 hours of a week to process cassava where there is no grating machine. Graters that can grind a bowl of cassava in one minute compared to hours by hand are reported to be available in 5 percent of rural communities in Imo State, Nigeria.⁹⁷

To address rural women's exploitation in Nigeria, feminists advocate that decision-makers need to make more than a necessary effort to ask the "woman question" among other feminists methodological tools mentioned earlier. In Emeagwali words, "the woman question should be seen as fundamentally related to the infrastructural conditions and environment at specific periods in the transformation of the production process."⁹⁸ From a historical standpoint, she argues that women's socio-economic roles and contributions are usually neglected by the dominant ruling class who fail to recognise the "activities of women as members of the producer class."⁹⁹ Thus, calling for decision-makers to "ask the woman question" by adopting GAT in energy decision-making.

Guided by the FLM, the next section argues for the adoption and utilization of GAT by the Nigerian government. In so doing, it shows how and why rural women can be integrated into energy decision-making processes. It thereafter examines the international framework(s) supporting the adoption and utilization of GAT.

3.0 Part III: Integrating Rural Women in Energy Decision-Making Process for Sustainable Rural Development

3.1 First Thing First: Adopting a Gender Analysis Tool

Gender analysis is a part of socio-economic analysis that exposes unequal gender relations and various developmental challenges that need to be addressed.¹⁰⁰ Unequal gender relations can be a hindrance to rural women's ability to participate and voice out their energy concerns and priorities at all levels of decision-making processes. Although, when compared to men, women are more severely impacted during energy crisis due to their distinct gender roles and responsibilities,¹⁰¹ women's energy needs receive very little attention because in theory energy policies are deemed to be gender-neutral while in reality they remain gender-blind.¹⁰² Hence, the need to adopt a gender analysis tool (GAT) in practice. By GAT I mean a data-gathering tool that provides decision-makers with useful information for understanding gender-energy differences as it exists in a country's specific context when formulating energy policies and strategies. The aim of GAT is to bridge the

⁹⁶ Kes and Swaminathan, "Gender & Time Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa," 18.

⁹⁷ Kes and Swaminathan, "Gender & Time Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa," 23.

⁹⁸ Emeagwali, "Women in Pre-capitalist Socio-Economic Formations in Nigeria," 52

⁹⁹ Emeagwali, "Women in Pre-capitalist Socio-Economic Formations in Nigeria," 53

¹⁰⁰ C. Ndungo, C. Masiga, I. Bekalo, W.O Ochola and R. A. Mwonya, "Gender and Natural Resources Management," in *Managing Natural Resources for Development in Africa : A Resources Book*, eds. Washington Ochola, Pascal Sanginga, Isaac Bekalo (Nairobi, University of Nairobi Press, 2010), 236. See also, Hunt, "Introduction to gender analysis," 139 (Gender relations means the social and economic relations that exist between women and men which are socially construed).

¹⁰¹ Women need energy both for reproductive and productive activities.

¹⁰² Joy Clancy, "Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Sector," (presentation, MDB-Sponsored Regional Workshops to Mainstream Gender Equality in Infrastructure Projects and Policies Africa Regional Workshop Addis Ababa, March 22-24, 2011).

gender gap that exists between men and women in energy decision-making processes while promoting gender equality.¹⁰³ It's useful when considering the negative and positive socio-economic impact of energy policies and programmes on females and males.¹⁰⁴ By utilizing this tool, rural women will be given an opportunity to participate reasonably in energy decision-making processes. Participation includes analysing and integrating their energy needs and experiences into energy interventions. This is important because, "Without data, there is no visibility, without visibility, there is no priority".¹⁰⁵

Advantages of adopting and utilizing GAT at an early stage of planning a project design or policy formulation are: 1) decision-makers will quickly recognise gaps and find necessary solutions to a successful implementation and 2) women's participation in energy decision-making process can help shape the contents of energy policies and strategies that translates to sustainable rural development and ultimately national economic growth. By including women as partners in energy sector intervention, they have a tendency to influence energy production and consumption in reality. This is so because women are saddled with the responsibility of shaping their children's energy consumption and conservation habits.¹⁰⁶ Thus, addressing policy weaknesses require the full and equal participation of women among other stakeholders.¹⁰⁷ The reality is that until rural women's perspective are integrated and their socio-economic contribution is supported and recognised, progress towards effectively attaining sustainable development may remain incomplete.¹⁰⁸

In Nigeria, the main document that serves as a tool for integrating gender in decision making processes is the Nigerian Constitution.¹⁰⁹ Although, in section 15, the constitution appears to be gender-focused, regrettably, this section which falls within the scope of

¹⁰³ Canada International Developmental Agency, *Gender Equality policy and Tools*, (Quebec: Canada International Developmental Agency, 2010), 6.

¹⁰⁴ Juliet Hunt, "Introduction to Gender Analysis Concepts and Steps," *Development Bulletin*, no. 64 (2004): 140, http://www.vasculitisfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/development_studies_network_intro_to_gender_analysis.pdf.

¹⁰⁵ Nancy j. Hafkin and Sophia Huyer, "Women and Gender in ICT Statistics and Indicators for Development," *Information Technologies and International Development* 4, no. 2 (2007): 26.

¹⁰⁶ Cecelski, *The Role of Women in Sustainable Energy Development*, 10

¹⁰⁷ Such as Financial institutions, energy generators, distributors and Transmitters, technology manufacturers etc.

¹⁰⁸ ECREEE, *Situation Analysis of Energy*, 19.

¹⁰⁹ Sec 15 (2) provides that "... national integration shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited."

Chapter II of the Constitution¹¹⁰ is non-justiciable¹¹¹ and as such cannot be litigated upon.¹¹² In line with feminists', this implies that where female citizens are not integrated for any reason whatsoever the only option available to them is silence¹¹³ and continuous marginalization.¹¹⁴

3.2 Obstacles

- **Gender unawareness:** where rural women are unaware of the socio-economic consequences of their gender roles it can be an obstacle to their level of participation. It is important to create necessary awareness.
- Lack of expertise and training of officials who will use the tool can be a barrier to achieving the desired result.¹¹⁵ Untrained and inexperienced interviewers may limit the effect and efficient use of GAT.
- Lack of basic instruments that can be used to monitor and measure gender indicators can be an obstacle.
- It can be considered a time-consuming process by women who are already consumed with their gender roles and by decision-makers who may think the process as complex and uncertain, resulting to a reluctance to apply it.

3.3 International Frameworks for Analysing Gender

Similar to regional frameworks¹¹⁶ which takes cognizance of the fact that reducing household burdens shouldered by rural women,¹¹⁷ require the establishment of mechanisms for the integration of women in developmental programmes both at the national and sub-national levels,¹¹⁸ international frameworks also makes necessary and revealing provisions.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid* (provides for the “Fundamental Objectives and Directives Principles of State Policy” The Chapter also provides for socio-economic rights).

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, sec 6(6) (c) (provides that judicial powers shall not, except as otherwise provided by the Constitution extend to matters within Chapter II). See also, Ijoma, “Decision-Making Process Towards Achieving Environmental Sustainability.”

¹¹² However, in the case of Archbishop Anthony Olubunmi Okojie v Attorney General of Lagos State, [1981]; NCLR 220 (HC), matters under chapter II which include sec. 15 have been held to be justiciable.

¹¹³ Ijoma, “Giving Women a Voice.”

¹¹⁴ Ijoma, “Decision-Making Process Towards Achieving Environmental Sustainability. Also, in section 42(2) the Constitution provides that “No Citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of *his* [Emphasis Added] birth”. However, by using a masculine pronoun *his* in the above provision without having it explained at the interpretation section of the Constitution (see, section 318) to include female and male, the Constitution appears to be gender-insensitive as it excludes women from “the benefits of this provision.”

¹¹⁵ Kyunghye Kim, “Gender Impact Assessment in Korea: Current Situation and Challenges,” GSPR 1, (2008): 12, www.slideshare.net/gdlnkdis/gender-impact-assessment-in-korea-current-situation-and-challenges.

¹¹⁶ Organization of African Unity, *Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa 1980-2000* (Addis Ababa: Organization of African Unity, 1980).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 86, para 302.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 86, para 299.

For instance, with the aim of ending unfair and differential treatment made against poor girls and women living in the rural areas, on the 18th of December 1979, the United Nations accepted the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*.

In 1992, at the summit on the economic advancement of rural women the *Geneva Declaration for Rural Women*¹¹⁹ was adopted by the wives of Heads of States.¹²⁰ At the summit, the wives recognised and brought to the knowledge of decision-makers that rural women are faced with poor socio-economic conditions.¹²¹ For rural women to attain socio-economic advancement and improve the welfare of rural development, one of the strategies recommended is for governments at all levels to change their policies and programmes to address and integrate the issues of women into development projects like technologies for alternative energy sources.¹²² They note that achieving this requires establishing a resilient mechanism for training policy-makers and field workers on ways of analysing gender namely: collecting and analysing national, regional and local data. In their view, “these will aid policy makers and project designers in assessing the socio-economic conditions of rural women.”¹²³

Three years later, in 1995 at the *fourth world conference on women* held at Beijing, national governments’ gathered together recognising that inequalities between women and men persists and remains an obstacle for development.¹²⁴ States Parties recognised that eradicating poverty, achieving the three components of sustainable development¹²⁵ and social justice requires the equal participation of women in socio-economic development.¹²⁶ Furthermore, women should be given equal access to the development of sustainable and affordable energy technologies¹²⁷ through the use of “participatory needs assessment” to design national energy policies and plans.¹²⁸ They note that women’s participation begins with analysing and integrating gender in a wide range of programmes and policies (including energy).¹²⁹

¹¹⁹ United Nations, *Geneva Declaration for Rural Women*, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://www.un-documents.net/gdrw.htm>.

¹²⁰ From Africa, Asia, Oceania, Europe and America.

¹²¹ UN, *Geneva Declaration*, Para 1.

¹²² UN, *Geneva Declaration*, Para 13 (ix).

¹²³ UN, *Geneva Declaration*, Para 13 (iv).

¹²⁴ UN, *Report of the Fourth World*, Para 1, 2, 4-5.

¹²⁵ Environmental Protection, Sustained Economic Growth and Social Development.

¹²⁶ UN, *Report of the Fourth World*, Para 16.

¹²⁷ Such as Renewable Energy Technologies.

¹²⁸ United Nations, *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women* (1995) at Para 256 (k).

¹²⁹ UN, *Report of the Fourth World*, Para 47,

Conclusion

In conclusion, empowering rural women for a socially inclusive economic growth starts from analysing and integrating their voices, needs, interest, experience and priorities in energy decision-making processes. There may be no hope towards attaining all the sustainable development goals in Nigeria until decision-makers begin to recognise the full and equal participation and contribution of rural women to the country's economic development. Finally, regarding women as partners in the energy sector and not mere consumers or beneficiaries remains germane to Sustainable Rural Development.

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