

# THE GLOBALIZED WORLD AND GENDER RIGHTS IN NIGERIA: THE GAINS, THE LOSSES\*

## ***Abstract***

*Globalization is all about making things Global. It is a phenomenon that integrates local products, services and cultures into a global culture defined by the world's economic and political super powers. The global flow of capital, commodities people and information which is the hallmark of globalization connotes equal exchanges and sharing of goods and services between countries and cultures. There are however, fears that globalization is creating increased gender inequalities. Nigeria like most other Sub-Saharan African States, exists with entrenched and endemic gender inequality. This article appraises globalization and its effect in general, and ultimately to determine its effect (positive and negative) on gender equality and rights in Nigeria.*

## **Introduction**

With globalization, discussions have initially centred on grand narratives, embracing developing and encompassing visions. Scientific standpoints were illustrated rather than empirically researched. The phenomenon globalization has now reached the stage in which its manifestations are analyzed in a precise manner in concrete geographical context and pertaining to different topics. It is in a stage of examining the manifestation of its interconnectivity in cities in the advanced economies, and whether it reflects the inequalities of the past, that were only visible at the continental level. Discourse on globalization today, focuses on local manifestations of global developments in terms of lifestyles, cultures, social cohesion, social conflict, identity formation, economic opportunity, survival strategies and above all inequalities and particularly with reference to this article, gender inequality and rights. Globalization has given many countries access to a wide range of products and services from around the globe. It has afforded people the opportunity to buy at a relatively cheap price, products and food that do not grow in their own countries, and all the year round. Like most good things in life, globalization is not without its disadvantages and short comings, so while one interpretation of globalization has to do with equal exchange and sharing of goods and services between countries and cultures, the reality of a globalized world is much different.

## **Globalization**

Globalization involves the idea of viewing the whole world as one mighty village with common trade, culture, social mobility and economic front. It is the process of creating languages, services and products that apply not just to an individual neighbourhood, city or country but to the entire world. It is characterized by a globally integrated economy, where decisions regarding production, consumption

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and other aspects of social relations increasingly bear transnational dimensions.<sup>1</sup> Globalization entails free trade, free mobility of both financial and real capital, and rapid diffusion of products, technologies, information and consumption patterns.<sup>2</sup>

Under globalization, government policy choices have geared towards free trade and financial flows. These policies tend favourably towards higher regulation of industry, privatization of state owned establishments and reduced expenditures on public issues. Of course, the liberalization policies and technological advancement, made economic fusion very rapid, creating a high level of economic integration causing a loose national state boundaries.

As a result of this, local products, services and cultures disappear into a global culture, a culture defined not by the global citizenry but rather the world's economic and political super- powers – mostly North American owned corporations<sup>3</sup>. In globalization, people seem to be consumed by a North American culture' accentuated by Coca-Cola, McDonald's, typical dancing styles and songs, and Nike running shoes<sup>4</sup>. Globalization does not only create one culture, it mandates people to re-orientate themselves to promote this culture<sup>5</sup>. The culture of working in factories to produce Nike running shoes and video cameras, and giant beef farms to produce hamburgers to be consumed by the rich, is a typical feature of globalization<sup>6</sup>.

Although globalization is about culture, it is mostly about money. Globalization encourages the merging of world economic markets through 'free' trade agreements, the creation of transnational corporations that sell products and services to people all over the globe, and the privatization of government services like health care, water, and mail delivery, in favour of private ownership. Unfortunately, globalization isn't about equal exchange as we are meant to believe, it is about concentrations of profit and power in certain parts of the world and with certain people<sup>7</sup>. The international trade agreements signed under globalization are devoid of any trade barriers and obstacles<sup>8</sup>. This makes it easy for countries to move their factories and services to countries of cheapest labour. With this, they produce at cheap rate which guarantees them maximum profits. The idea of free trade is that whichever country produces the cheapest products wins. Producing cheaply in this context means having cheap labour and conducive atmosphere where the harmful side product is shifted to another country. Globalization has injected into the system the idea that the best way for a country to reduce its spending is to initiate a cut-back on government services, such as health care, electricity, education and even mail

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<sup>1</sup>. United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women; Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) United Nations House Beirut (Lebanon) 8-10 November 1999 DAW working paper.

<sup>2</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>. Women and Globalization at <http://www.unpac.ca/economy/introglob.html> accessed on 10/6/11.

<sup>4</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>. E.g. It makes it possible for Female textile workers from Eastern Germany to lose their jobs to women in Bangladesh, Filipines clean vegetables and kitchen in Kuwait; and what is for the next meal is not decided by local women but by multinationals specializing in novelty food and genetically modified crops.

delivery<sup>9</sup>. Reduction of expenditure by the government is to ensure that they are able to pay back loans from IMF, and World-Bank which sometimes have been paid over and over again<sup>10</sup>.

### **Entrenched Gender Inequality in Nigeria**

Gender is a set of visible characteristics that distinguish male and female. Depending on the context, the distinguishing characteristics vary from sex to social role, to gender identity.<sup>11</sup> In recent times, the meaning of gender has in many contexts been extended to include and in many cases used specifically to mean the latter. For the purpose of this article, gender connotes the sexes; that is the male and female sexes and the roles constructed for them by societal acceptance. Gender inequality refers to the unequal opportunities in various spheres of development between men and women, which basically and characteristically tilt in favour of the men. Gender Rights also refer to the fundamental rights of each gender and by virtue of their being human, and how the incidence of gender has affected the exercise of their fundamental freedoms.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) prohibits *inter alia* discrimination on account of sex<sup>12</sup>, but many factors such as customary and religious laws have conspired together to rob women of the exercise and enjoyment of the right not to be discriminated against in Nigeria<sup>13</sup>. The inequality between men and women (gender inequality) in Nigeria is visible in almost all aspects of human endeavour.

### **Gender Inequality in Economics**

More than 550 million rural women constituting 50 percent of the world's rural population live below the poverty line, and women constitute nearly 70 percent of the world's 1.1 billion poor.<sup>14</sup> It is also recorded that more than 1 billion people in the world today, the great majority of whom are women live in unacceptable conditions of poverty mostly in the developing countries.<sup>15</sup> One of the key areas where gender inequality is grossly manifested in Nigerian society is in the economic sector. Economic growth is the production of goods *per capita* but how does one produce goods *per capita* where he or she has no capital?<sup>16</sup> The ability of the Nigerian women to participate in independent economic activities is limited by social obligations to husband and family. In traditional Nigerian society, women's participation in the productive process was well defined, varying from the economically independent and almost aggressive Yoruba women traders, to the

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<sup>9</sup>. Dorothy Iglis **Bread and Roses**. St. John's, New Found Land; Killick Press 1996

<sup>10</sup>. Corporate Watch at [www.corpwatch.org](http://www.corpwatch.org).

<sup>11</sup>. Gender at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender> accessed on 31/10/2010.

<sup>12</sup>. S. 42.

<sup>13</sup>. While a woman goes through the rigours of widowhood rites such as wailing intermittently, lying on a mat spread on the bare floor and in seclusion, a man is not expected to do the same when the wife dies. In fact, it is considered unmanly to cry. Women are not allowed by culture to inherit land in Ibo land even from their own father.

<sup>14</sup>. Critical Areas of Concern; A Preparatory Document to Beijing 1995 p. 37.

<sup>15</sup>. *Ibid*.

<sup>16</sup>. F. Anyogu, **Access to Justice in Nigeria; A gender Perspective** Enugu, Ebenezer Productions Nigeria Ltd 2009 p.301.

dependent and often secluded Hausa women. It is therefore, important to note that women as a social group are not homogenous. While the majority of women could not own land and need the permission of their spouses before they could dispose of their crops, few others had access to land even in better ecological zones. For example, it has been noted that the Oba's wives in Yorubaland had greater access to land in better ecological zones than the wives of poor peasants.<sup>17</sup> Women in Nigeria have been confined to activities which were of secondary importance and which aided household consumption rather than capital accumulation, while they marketed the more important products for their husbands. Women also account for more than 60 percent of agricultural labour force and yet only an infinitesimal 10 percent of credit allocated to small farmers gets to women.<sup>18</sup> The economic activity data also overlook unpaid labour in households and agricultural sector. This has made women statistically invisible in most measurements of economic activity. The effect is that women are then characterized by such measurements as unproductive, unoccupied and economically inactive<sup>19</sup>.

Economic policies seem to be gender insensitive and such gaps must be checked. Urbanization and current growing financial pressures have awoken the desire for economic independence, and this has necessitated that women take up jobs in addition to their 'unseen' and 'unaccounted for' economic activities at home. This means that developmental policies, have to manifest some gender-equity, but on the contrary some of such policies (e.g. the Structural Adjustment Programme) have further resulted in "Feminization of Poverty". When workers are laid off under this programme, women are most often the casualties due to the inbuilt bias in SAP against small scale enterprises and agricultural industry that women are primarily engaged in.<sup>20</sup>

It is also known that at any income level, women pay more tax than men<sup>21</sup>. Whatever consideration that informed this practice has no place in society any more, as many women for many reasons are now single handedly raising their children, and keeping their homes. It is also true that more than 80 percent of a woman's income goes into solving family needs. If anybody needs reduced tax, it should be a woman. These gender gaps are inimical to the attainment of sustainable economic development, as equal economic opportunities for both the female and male genders lead to sustainable national development. The gender inequality in economics also makes many women dependent on men and this is a major constraint to their exercise of the fundamental freedoms.

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<sup>17</sup>. O.I. Aina, "General Overview of the Status of Women in Nigeria", in A.A. Afolabi **Gender Gaps in the 1999 Constitution**, Women Advocates Research and Documentation Center p. 15.

<sup>18</sup>. 4th World Conference on Women, Summary 2 – Summary of the 1994 World Survey on The Role of Women in Development (Sales No 95 IV.1).

<sup>19</sup>. Isabella Okagbue **Women's Rights are Human Rights** Lagos MIJ Publishers 1996.

<sup>20</sup>. The plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council, Reports and Documents No. 22/Geneva 1994 p. 9.

<sup>21</sup>. Known to the authors, and verified with colleagues in various different ranks.

### **Gender Inequality in Education**

One of the major factors for the low level of female participation in the formal sector is inequality of access to education between men and women. Access to education is not only fundamental, but is also a veritable tool for women's effective participation in national development. The school is an important agent of socialization. Consistent sex stereotype roles at home and more importantly in the school can create inequality in educational opportunities. The directive principles in Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), in agreement stipulate that equal and adequate educational opportunities should be made available at all levels.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, this constitutional provision is made unenforceable by the same Constitution.<sup>23</sup> It is therefore, expected to be manifested in policies which do not carry the force of law and so the female literacy rate in Nigeria stands at 39.5 percent compared with a male literacy rate of 62.5 by 1996 and has remained abysmally low since then.<sup>24</sup> While girls in the Southern states have high enrolment rates, some other states especially in the North have very low enrolment rates for girls, and thus mathematically present a low rate for girls generally on the average. Many cultural practices have also helped to compound the precarious position of Nigerian females in the area of education; teenage pregnancy and early marriage rank the highest in this. Where family financial resources are scarce, the cultural practice of male preference has indicated that the boys be taken care of educationally before any consideration for the girls. In some families, it is so bad that the girls are usually given away in marriage so as to enable the families educate the boys without any consideration as to whether the girl child in question is more brilliant than the boy.

### **Gender Inequality in Politics and Public Voice**

There is no doubt that discriminatory attitudes and unequal power relations, account for the low participation and muffled voice of women in public life, despite the promise of equality of political and civil rights by the Constitution. It is to be noted that participation of women in public life is low all over the world but this varies from country to country and Nigeria has one of the lowest scores in this regard. The discriminatory attitudes have ensured a socialization of women that has left many women too timid to assume positions of leadership, and also makes them untrusting of other women. This invariably makes women reluctant to vote other women into such positions. There has been a recently concluded election in Nigeria, and suffice it to say that, only one female ran for the office of the President, and that of course, the President is not a female. The election did not produce a female governor either. As for other positions such as Senate, and the various houses of assembly, the usual abysmally low percentages of females were recorded. Men seem to be the officials in the political parties and the electoral process, while women remain essentially supporters, side campaigners and clappers for men's achievements in the field. The effect of non-involvement of women in politics at decision-making levels is that

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<sup>22</sup>. S. 18(1), CFRN 1999.

<sup>23</sup>. S (6) (b) (c), CFRN 1999.

<sup>24</sup>. The Nigerian Human Development Report UNDP Lagos Nigeria 1997.

women's gender specific concerns remain unaddressed and the benefit of their perspective on mainstream issues is lost, and thus equality and consequently national development remain an illusion.

### **Gender Inequality and Socio-cultural Institutions (Family)**

Nigerian women are not adequately protected, even in family life as several inequalities still play against them because of certain cultural and religious acceptances. The three forms of marriage in the country (customary, monogamous and Islamic) also have a role to play. The minimum legal age for marriage is 18 and the monogamous (civil or christian marriage) abides by this, but customary and Islamic marriages encourage child marriage in which the bride is not old enough to share in the responsibilities of marriage. While polygamy is prohibited in monogamous (civil or christian) marriage, every customary and Islamic marriage is potentially polygamous. It is also to be noted that more than one-third of Nigerian women are in a polygamous union.<sup>25</sup> In all the three forms of marriages in Nigeria, husbands alone make decisions concerning the upbringing of their children especially in the area of health, marriage and education, even though in civil or christian marriages parental authority is supposed to be shared between husband and wife.

Customary marriages do not recognize women's right to inheritance especially in the South East of Nigeria where neither wives nor daughters inherit a deceased's estate. Wives do not inherit in Yoruba-land but daughters do so equally with their brothers<sup>26</sup>. Islamic marriages recognize inheritance by both wives and daughters although the daughters inherit half what is due to the boys<sup>27</sup>. In both latter cases, there is a sort of equity in the Inequality but it is difficult to fathom out what informed the position in the South East area of Nigeria.

It would seem also that the physical integrity of women is not protected in Nigeria. The Country's Penal Code<sup>28</sup> applicable to the North permits husbands to beat their wives as long as it does not amount to serious bodily harm. Domestic violence is also a luxuriating iniquity against the Nigerian women. Far from women reacting to this obnoxious situation, 64.5 percent of Nigerian women actually believe it is normal for them to be beaten by their husbands as reported by a 2003 Demography and Health Survey. Female Genital Mutilation is prohibited by legislation in many states but it is difficult to eliminate it at the national level and even in the states that have banned it, as the law is difficult to enforce.<sup>29</sup> Rape, a heinous crime carries on conviction, life imprisonment but both the Criminal Code Act<sup>30</sup> (for the South) and Penal Code<sup>31</sup> (for the North) overtly allow spousal rape respectively thus;

Any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl without her consent or with her consent if the consent is obtained by force -----or in the case of a married women

<sup>25</sup>. Gender Equality in Nigeria at <http://genderindex.org/Country/Nigeria> accessed on 24/6/2011.

<sup>26</sup>. F. Anyogu, **Access to Justice in Nigeria: A Gender Perspective**. *Op.cit.* p. 319.

<sup>27</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>. S. 55 (1) (d)Cap 89 Laws of Northern Nigeria 1963.

<sup>29</sup>. Generally, Genital mutilation is done mostly by illiterate women either in remote villages or in seclusion, hence the difficulty to enforce the prohibition.

<sup>30</sup>. C38 Laws of the Federation 2004.

<sup>31</sup>. Cap 89 Laws of Northern Nigeria 1963.

by impersonating her husband is guilty of an offence which is called rape.<sup>32</sup>

and

- 1) A man is said to commit rape who, save in the case referred to in sub-section (2) has sexual intercourse with a woman in any of the following circumstances.
- 2) Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife is not rape, if she has attained puberty.<sup>33</sup>

### **Gender Inequality and Law**

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) prohibits discrimination based on many factors including sex<sup>34</sup>. As Nigeria is a Federal Republic, every state in it has the authority to make its own legislations within the powers granted it by the Constitution<sup>35</sup>. This fact and the multiplicity of culture and religion make it difficult to harmonize legislations and eliminate discriminatory measures. These cultural and religious backgrounds have informed the making of some discriminatory laws such as citizenship laws<sup>36</sup>, proof of rape<sup>37</sup>, indecent assault on males/females<sup>38</sup> and others which have put women at a lower legal status than men. A ray of hope exists in the establishment of a National Committee on the Reform of Discriminatory Laws Against Women which has drafted a bill in pursuance thereto. This Bill is under discussion at the National Assembly. Again, a Bill “Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill 2010”, has been proposed at the Lagos State House of Assembly<sup>39</sup>. The House of Assembly is requested through this Bill, to enact a law to incorporate and enforce certain provisions of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) and expand on the Constitution’s provision against discrimination on grounds of sex<sup>40</sup>.

### **The Effect of Globalization**

Leaders of the World’s richest and most economically influential countries have continued to gather to conspire on how to carry out activities that will expand globalization<sup>41</sup>. The G8 Leaders, (Britain, Japan, Canada, U.S.A, Russia, France, Germany and Italy) continue to rotate among themselves to carry out these clandestine meetings to depress further, the already depressed economies of the world<sup>42</sup>. Of course, protests have followed these meetings and one of the reasons

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<sup>32</sup>. S. 357 Criminal Code Act.

<sup>33</sup>. S.282 (2).Penal Code

<sup>34</sup>. S. 42 CFRN 1999(as amended).

<sup>35</sup>. SS 5, 6 and 7 CFRN 1999 (as amended)

<sup>36</sup>. S. 26(2) (a) *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>. S. 112 Evidence Act E<sub>14</sub> L F N 2004

<sup>38</sup>. SS. 353 and 300 of Criminal Code Act C38 LFN 2004.

<sup>39</sup>. **Adefunmilayo Tejuosho**, Lagos State House of Assembly.

<sup>40</sup>. *Ibid*; However laws that discriminate against women have been held to be unconstitutional and illegal – see **Reed v. Reed** 404 U.S. 71(1971); **Phillips v. Martin Marietta Corporation** 400, u.s. 542 (1971) & **Frontiero v. Richardson** (1972) . NB Under the 1960 and 1963 Constitutions of Nigerian, women in Northern States were not allowed to vote.

<sup>41</sup>. At [http://www.im\[ac. ca/economy/introglab.html](http://www.im[ac. ca/economy/introglab.html) accessed on 4/9/2010.

<sup>42</sup>. *Ibid.*

given for these protests is the fact that between 1980 and 1996 while world trade was increasing, 28 of the World's poorest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa became poorer.<sup>43</sup>

## **Globalization and Gender Equality**

### **The Losses**

For many countries, trade could be the primary vehicle for realizing the benefits of globalization. Trade policies affect employment, production, distribution and consumption patterns, cultural values, social relations and the environment, all of which engage and affect women as well as men.

Despite new initiatives and commitments, the sad reality is that the situation of the worlds' women is progressively deteriorating due to globalization. At this point, it is necessary to take counts of the negative effect of globalization on gender rights in Nigeria.

### **Trade and Economy**

Many years ago, when the Europeans sought to teach people religion, they also traded the wealth of the places they set foot on in the bargain. This trend is therefore not a new thing. The free-trade characterizing globalization, is thus akin to exploitation of poor countries as was done in the era of colonization. The trend towards privatization manifest in the harrowing experiences of citizens of countries indebted to the World Powers controlled IMF and World Bank, is a pointer to the inequity in Globalization. This indebtedness has necessitated the privatization of social services as a major requirement for Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP). The new rules of globalization and those playing them focus on integrating global markets, at the expense of the needs of the people, and countries that the market cannot meet. Nigeria is one of such Sub-Saharan poor developing countries going through the nasty experiences of economy integration of globalization. When people are laid off in obedience to the dictates of the Structural Adjustment Policies,<sup>44</sup> it mostly affects women because a far greater percentage of those who get laid off are women concentrated at the sweat jobs.

In Nigeria, the resulting withdrawal of government from social services is also felt more by the female gender. When government stops providing essential services, private companies come in not only to provide the services, but also at a maximum profit. This essentially creates poverty. Already in Nigeria, poverty seems to wear a feminine look. Of the 54.4 percent of poor Nigerians, 75 percent are women<sup>45</sup>. The processes emerging from globalization will ensure a deeper drive into gender inequality in this direction. In Nigeria, because of privatization, education is becoming a luxury very few can afford and healthcare has become inaccessible. Where education is expensive, the girl child as aforesaid suffers as already existing

<sup>43</sup>. Putting poverty on the Trade Agenda. In common: Gender Action Against Poverty 2001 also at <http://.Inpac.ca/economy/introglob.html> accessed on 4/9/2010.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/beirutglobal.htm> accessed on 4/9/10

<sup>45</sup>. National Bureau of Statistics; available on line <file:///F:/women and poverty 3.htm> accessed on 3/5/2010.

gender inequality caused by male preference will ensure that she drops out of school in preference for her male siblings. Inaccessibility of healthcare could mean government hospitals become non-functional or ill-equipped. The private hospitals become expensive and health becomes a hard issue for all, especially the female gender who have to go through pregnancy and child bearing in addition to other health needs. The forces of globalization having limited the States' ability to provide social protection, have made human capital investments more strained. This poses a challenge to Poverty Eradication Programmes, and the efforts to respond to the needs of the less visible segments of the population especially women and children, in responding to their right to basic services and development of their capabilities.

Particularly for women in Nigeria, the craze for fast food (A dividend of globalization or better still *Mcdonaldization*) has put many women in local subsisting catering sector, off their self-employed business. They now have to scamper for paid jobs in fast food joints such as "Mr. Biggs," "Chicken Republic," "Golden Toast" "Tantalizers", "Macdons" and many others. They lose their financial and economic freedom to the management of these so called fast food establishments.

The extension of the market can have both positive and negative effects for women's situation and gender relations. Counting loses will include increased exploitation and dependency. Most of the cheap and sweat labour, are in low paying, labour-intensive sectors(including concrete work in construction sites) where flexibility and ability to work hard are needed and women are already over-stretched in such areas. The incidence of globalization drives wages even lower and this does not help the achievement of gender equality needed for national development.

While the shift of labour intensive industries are now centred in middle-income developing economies, creating job opportunities for women, the poor conditions under which many women enter the labour market are still persistent<sup>46</sup>. This is acute in sweat shops in informal sector through which arrangements such as Sub-contracting and outsourcing have become integral part of the formal economy and have experienced a boom since the incidence of globalization.<sup>47</sup>

### **Mobility and Migration**

When inequalities between countries created by unequal power relations as witnessed in globalization becomes, overtly manifest, citizens of poor nations desire to leave their own countries in search of greener pastures elsewhere. This has affected Nigeria greatly because of the brain- drain syndrome. Many of the very experienced professionals, especially medical doctors, left the country to work in other countries. The Nigerian hospitals were then left to operate without adequate staffing. Healthcare became both un-qualitative and expensive, and this has resulted in a lot of careless deaths<sup>48</sup>. Emerging global trends are also significantly making cross-border flow of

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<sup>46</sup> . F. Anyogu, *Access to Justice in Nigeria: A Gender Perspective* *opcit.* P. 307.

<sup>47</sup> . Engaging in Globalization at [http://www.un.org/women\\_watch/daw/csw/beinitglobal.htm](http://www.un.org/women_watch/daw/csw/beinitglobal.htm) accessed on 4/9/2010

<sup>48</sup> . Known to the authors, some people have died in the Teaching Hospitals because they were left unattended to for days, some due to ordinary malaria.

labour more permissive<sup>49</sup>. Short term contracted labours have become significant. Women's work is rated as low cost and flexible<sup>50</sup>, so this trend is very significant in gender relations. While migration to greener pastures may improve women's lives, many have also become victims of trafficking especially for sexual exploitation. This is typical in Nigeria where young girls and even women are recruited into foreign countries with promises of good jobs and better life, only to realize that they were recruited for purposes of prostitution.

### **Gender Dimension of Poverty under Liberalization Policies**

For the purpose of this article, the word poverty remains a condition in which a person or community is deprived of, and, or lacks the essentials for a minimum standard of well-being in life<sup>51</sup>. The essentials include food, shelter, health, education among other social amenities. The evidence of poverty and food insecurity has been acutely manifested in the last decade. With this, is equally the conflict in poverty indicators. The Millennium Development Goals, have eradication of poverty as a key objective yet many years on, an increasing number of people remain food insecure<sup>52</sup>. Food Production and food access are two different players in the arena of poverty and development. A poor nation may increase its food production, national food self-sufficiency and economic growth to lift itself upward in the poverty statistics, but sections of its people may remain food insecure because of other factors such as financial constraint that affect their access to the food.<sup>53</sup> It is construed from this that development benchmarks that dwell on increased food production which does not run concurrently with human development cannot give the correct picture *viz a viz* distribution of food and ultimately Human Development indices.

The Nigerian economy is an agrarian one and women constitute the majority of the poor. They are characterized by landlessness, as women are not allowed to own land traditionally in many parts of Nigeria<sup>54</sup> although women can today, acquire land by purchase or by allocation from government. Many families are also headed by females in Nigeria; many are remote from development assistance due to time, health and illiteracy constraints. The gender dimension of poverty is therefore greatly reinforced here. The table below showing the relationship of Human Development, Gender Development and Human Poverty indices in four countries is evidence of the abysmal position of women in Nigeria.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup>. Globalization. Com at [http://www.globalizacija.com/doc\\_en/e00078\\_glo.html](http://www.globalizacija.com/doc_en/e00078_glo.html). accessed on 24/6/11.

<sup>50</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>. P. Townsend, **Poverty in the UK** London Penguin Books `1979 p.42.

<sup>52</sup>. [http://www.globalizacija.com/doc\\_en/e\\_0078\\_glo.html](http://www.globalizacija.com/doc_en/e_0078_glo.html). accessed on 24/6/11.

<sup>53</sup>. B.O Akanji, "Globalization, Poverty and Food Security: The Linkages of Gender Inequality and Agricultural Growth in Africa; Conceptual and Empirical issues" at [http://www.globalizacija.com/doc\\_en/e0078\\_glo.htm](http://www.globalizacija.com/doc_en/e0078_glo.htm) accessed on 24/6/11.

<sup>54</sup>. Although the women from Arochukwu could own land traditionally even in earlier times.

<sup>55</sup> B.O. Akanji *op.cit* p 2

	Human Development indicator	Gender Development indicator	Human Poverty index	Macroeconomic growth (G N P per capita)/year
Norway	0.934	0.932	3.9	36,806
Thailand	0.745	0.766	18.7	2593
Ghana	0.556	0.552	35.4	399
Nigeria	0.439	0.421	37.6	256

An analysis of the above table shows that human poverty is highest in Nigeria and gender development is lowest in Nigeria. The lower the gender development, the higher the human poverty and of course, the macro economic growth is also low.

### **Gender Rights**

Early discourse x-rayed the entrenched gender inequality in favour of males in Nigeria. Gender development for the purpose of this article means developing the underdeveloped gender (in the context of Nigeria, the female gender). The long standing discrimination against the female gender paralyzed their growth in various aspects of life. Economically, they were stunted, legally they assumed a lower status than men, and socially, they were down the ladder. This situation made it difficult for many women to recognize, enjoy, or enforce their fundamental rights promised by the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria 1999 (as amended). Inbuilt in Globalization are many biases that further cause gender inequality especially in the developing countries like Nigeria. This will make for further violation of the rights of women, and increasing difficulty in their enjoyment of the fundamental freedoms.

The Globalized world, despite these negative effects, has also opened some new horizons for women. Because of gender inequalities and discrimination in all parts of the world, especially in Africa of which Nigeria is a part, women can be affected more negatively by globalization processes and policies than men. On the other hand, globalization has significant gains for women, even in Nigeria.

### **The Gains of Globalization**

Globalization is not all about losses for the Nigerian woman and her fundamental rights. There are some gains and these include;

#### **Increased Employment Opportunities**

With the trend, there is increased employment opportunity for women in non-traditional sector. This enables them to earn and control more income. This is essentially empowering as it would help women to negotiate their role and capacity within both the family enclave and society at large. Economic dependence on the male decreases so that women do not have to tolerate the violation of their rights, no matter where it is coming from. They will gradually come out of the position, where they need the economic assistance of their violators. Economically, they can now

fight legally for their fundamental human rights in the event of violations. This again means their exercise of access to justice as promised in our Statute books.<sup>56</sup>

### **Diversification of Interests**

Increase in World trade, particularly in services, which is the focal point in globalization, has increased the involvement of women in various occupations and professions of the services sector. Women around the World and in Nigeria, are now found in professional services like, law, accounting, banking, airline booking (Travel agents) and computing. This development has removed many women from the stereotype jobs like nursing and teaching. This in itself is an exercise of their fundamental right of liberty *via* choice of career.

### **Migration**

Women have more chances of migrating to work abroad and this improves their life chances and opportunities.

### **Governance**

Globalization has generated an unprecedented understanding among nations that socio-economic rights are part of the international human rights concern. Nigerian women are not secluded from the growing international women's movements and their influence over intergovernmental processes. These processes are empowering women and making it possible for women's organizations in Nigeria and other countries to grow, and bring positive developments in the lives of women. Many of them are basically involved in the fight for the human rights of the female gender and the empowerment of women in general.

### **Technological Change**

The emergence of technological change has been of great help to the empowerment of women all over the world especially in Nigeria. Women in Nigeria and elsewhere are using the internet and e-mail for development processes such as networking, advocacy, dissemination and exchange of information. There is also employment in information processing work. It is noteworthy that the majority of the computer operators both in large and small scale enterprises are women. Information Communication Technology has also improved the access to health of women in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

It would be observed that the losses come with some gains and vice versa. All that is needed is some harmonization and suggestions for mechanisms to avoid new forms of exclusions and isolation of the female gender. It is therefore, recommended as follows:

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56. S. 36 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended).

### **Monitor**

Because of gender inequalities and discrimination in many parts of the world including Nigeria, which make women more vulnerable to the negative impacts of globalization, it is necessary to monitor the gender impact of change so that the little efforts so far made in the achievement of gender equality, and the expansion of human capabilities, are not sacrificed on the altar of trade and border liberalizations.

### **Surveys and Analysis**

While surveys focus on the labour market participation within the changing world and in Nigeria, further research is needed to assess the impact of globalization on other aspects of life.

### **International Mechanisms for Labour**

Due to the lack of effective international mechanisms that regulate and protect the rights of labour moving across national borders, migrants are vulnerable to human right abuses. Nigeria should therefore, make more effective, its legal and administrative mechanisms for checkmating human trafficking as many of the supposed migrants for job opportunities end up being victims of trafficking mostly for purposes of sexual abuse and forced prostitution.

### **Exclusion from I C T**

Millions of women in Nigeria still do not have access to Information Communication Technology due to factors like cost, location, and time constraint. Mechanisms should be evolved to remedy such factors, for example, by providing a central ICT Centre in every community etc.

### **Education**

The gains of globalization have not been equitably distributed, and the gap between rich and poor countries, men and women still exists. For women, the gains have concentrated in the hands of women who are better placed in life with higher levels of education, and access to capitals and resources. The answer in Nigeria still remains “education”. Education of women will bring them out of the doldrums of ignorance, exclusion, isolation, gender rights blindness and human rights abuse.

### **Elimination of Gender Inequality**

There should be a concerted effort at the elimination of gender inequality in Nigeria. All the cultural bottle necks that drag women down economically, legally and socially must be done away with. It is only when gender equality is attained, that world policies will affect men and women equally in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

This article has tried to give an insight into what globalization as a world process entails. The endemic gender inequality has been discussed also. Both the positive and negative effects of globalization on women and gender rights have also been outlined. Recommendations as to a possible way forward have also been made. It should be noted that the deep-rooted gender inequality and abrasion of women’s

human rights that exist in Nigerian society were not brought on by globalization. These inequalities exist to be affected either positively or negatively by imminent changes in world processes and policies, of which Nigeria cannot help but be a part of. Globalization policies like all other endeavours in life have both positive and negative impacts on all the countries of the world. Because extreme gender inequality exists in Nigeria, the negative policies in Globalization and its attendant free trade re-enforce further gender inequality which consequently deepens the violation of women's human rights. It is hoped that the recommendations especially the elimination of gender inequality shall be hearkened to and that it would put men and women in Nigeria on a pedestal to be affected equally by World policies.

