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Contextualising African Women's Empowerment in Agriculture: Challenges from Climate Change and Mineral Extraction Perspectives

By Lere Amusan¹ and Oluwole Olutola²

Abstract

Most cultures in Africa view women's role as subordinate to that of men. The patriarchal nature of human and social systems that are more or less an enduring feature of a typical African society, dictates that women are inferior and less powerful when compared to their male counterpart. Hence, their role should naturally be of a domestic calling. In addition to being relegated to the background of domestic affairs, most women function as food producers, at least, at the subsistence level. These dual roles are mostly unpaid, under-valued and, therefore, hardly accounted for in monetary terms. Rather than being beneficiaries of development having also contributed to it, women not only lack access to technological raw materials of productive agriculture, but also they actually become major victims of associated untoward fall-outs of developmental processes. Climate change-induced stresses and ecological damage resulting from mineral extraction in most African states exacerbate the burdens of women's role in agriculture. Thus, relying on eco-feminism theory, this paper investigates the agricultural role of women in Africa amidst climate change- and mineral extraction-induced challenges. To guarantee region-wide food security, it recommends a more agriculturally gendered continent.

Keywords: Subsistence Farming, Eco-feminism, Climate Change, Mineral Extraction.

Introduction

Women's rights are associated with gender equality, non-discrimination, and children's rights. In line with Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), there is a provision for equal rights of men and women to participate in political activities of their state. In the same manner, African Charter (Art. 3) requires States to "ensure the elimination of every form of discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the women and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions." Similarly, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) calls for equal rights and Art. 3 No. 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) forbids discrimination based on sex while No. 100 calls for equal pay for work of equal value. In the pre-colonial era, African women used to own land. However, the situation has changed since the introduction of colonialism and capitalism on the continent. This development does not only constrained them with limited access to land ownership and control, but it also popularised the patriarchal structure with a masculine mentality that dominates socio-cultural perspectives across Africa today. It also points to the argument that "Patriarchy is the prime obstacle to women's advancement and development...In the modern world where women go ahead by their merit, patriarchy creates obstacles for women to go forward in society (Sultana, 2010-2011: 1). This

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therefore consolidates gender subordination in the context of men-women relations. Women, including young girls, constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in Africa. As elsewhere in the rest of the world, they play a routine role as domestic workers. Sudarcasa (1986: 91) argues that “Women were depicted as ‘saddled’ with home and domesticity; men were portrayed as enjoying the exhilaration of life in the ‘outside’ world.” For the most part, the societal roles of men and women are perceived differently. As mothers, wives and housemaids, women perform vital roles such as child bearing/nurturing, home making and other domestic services generally. These roles are not only crucial to the well-being of the family as an important social unit, but also to the society as a whole. More importantly, women also work long hours in agriculture, among many other multitasking features of their livelihoods. Though their agricultural role is primarily one of subsistence, as a means to ensure household survival in addition to whatever supports they receive from the dominant male as the head of the family, these roles are hardly recognised in the capitalist production system in Africa as it is often seen in the informal economic context. This, however, is not peculiar to Africa; even though some other connecting factors typical of any continents with a relatively large number of developing countries tend to make it a unique and, perhaps, worst scenario in Africa. These among others include a relatively high poverty rate, widespread disease and general lack of development. As an important contributor to most economies on the continent, the continued under-valuing of women’s role in agriculture would mean that the potential contribution of the sector to the socio-economic development is yet to be fully realised. Worse still, agriculture remains the most climate-sensitive sector with climate change constituting perhaps the greatest ecological threat not only to subsistence farming but also agricultural development generally. The continent’s vulnerability to climate change is arguably relatively high (Lalthapersad-Pillay and Udjo, 2014; Mwiturubani and Wyk, 2010; Tadesse, 2010). Besides, mineral resource development, which also remains a major continental economic activity generate some socio-economic and environmental repercussions which, again, may impact negatively on the agricultural role of women on the continent.

This paper examines the agricultural role of women in Africa amidst climate change, and ensures policy recommendations that advocate for an agriculturally-gendered continent.

Theoretical Framework

Naturally, this paper finds its justification within the theoretical framework of feminism far more than any other social theory. In particular, it singles out eco-feminism given its central focus on the interconnection between human (men-women relations) and nature with a strong position towards ecological ethics. According to Besthorne and Pearson McMillan (cited in Stephens et al., 2010: 380), ecofeminism provides a feminist/ecological dominance theory rooted in the destructive theories of patriarchy. In other words, ecofeminism attempts to theorise on the one hand a number of ways in which men and women relate given that each class shares some attributes that is they are identified and perform different roles in a society and, on the other hand, is their connection with the nonhuman world.

The objective here is to explore how the theoretical paradigm of ecofeminism can be employed as an analytical framework for understanding women’s agricultural role in the context of the challenges posed by climate change and mineral resource development in Africa. However, much like the case with the broader feminism where "diversity and disagreement occur side by side with unity and consensus" (Chapman, 1993: 195-197; Lindsey, 1997: 17), eco-feminism equally yields itself to no single thought (Gaard, 2011; McMahan, 1997; Moore, 2011; Plumwood,

2004). For instance, according to Moore (2011: 6), eco-feminism consists of a diversity of positions. Two of these perspectives are identifiable - nature eco-feminism and socio-cultural eco-feminism - as more suitable for the analysis in this paper. Nature eco-feminism is premised on the argument that there is an important intersection between woman and nature that is primarily biological and psychological. It is argued that women can be closer to nature because of their positions as mothers, homemakers and carers, and by reason of which they tend to save human beings and the environment from men's domination of nature. Woman's identity, according to nature ecofeminists, is believed to be partly from her biology – especially her reproductive capacity – and partly from her child-rearing responsibilities (Tong, 2009: 244). In particular, Mary Daly (cited in Tong, 2009: 247) observed that prior to the establishment of patriarchy, there existed an original matriarchy. Hence, Daly (cited in Plumwood, 2004: 46) advocates for a gynocentric world as against the dominant male-centred world that exhibits gender oppression, hegemonic masculinity that undervalues nature-woman interrelationship, and patriarchal culture as the privileged factor in explaining cultural failings like environmental degradation. While also linking men's pollution of nature to men's "pollution" of women (Tong, 2009: 248), Daly drew particular attention to the destructive nature of men which is further deeply entrenched through some kind of gene-production as the main cause of many problems that confront humanity, including ecological crises such as greenhouse gas emissions (GHGEs), as well as mineral extraction and its attendant socio-economic issues, which constitute the centrepiece in this paper.

At the other extreme is socio-cultural feminism that sought to deemphasise the nature-woman intersection, which is believed to be imposed by a socially constructed patriarchal order. Patriarchy allows that men continue to exploit women and nature on the one hand, while women see themselves as culturally subordinated to men and, by the same reasoning, nature is subordinated to culture (Stephens et al., 2010: 374; Sultana, 2010-2011: 1). To bring about a socio-cultural order in which men and women have some sense of 'equal' values and integrity, socio-cultural ecofeminists contend that such dominant models of culture and humanity must be challenged, both for women and for nature (Plumwood, 2004: 48). Granted that women are in a position to transform the meaning of their connection to both nature and culture, it is important that the male-female dichotomy that is rooted in the Western culture should be rid off (Lockie, 2004: 39; McMahan, 1997: 167; Tong, 2009: 256).

Although this paper leans towards nature ecofeminism than socio-cultural feminism, its style of approach is such that accounts for the overlaps regarding the plural theses within the two strands.

Besides, eco-feminism shares some fundamental tenets that are of relevance to this paper and, therefore, worth highlighting. These include: (1) value hierarchy which tends to perpetuate the "up-down" thinking, especially such that ascribes higher value, status, or prestige on what is "up" rather than on what is "down"; (2) value dualisms that entrench class division between social entities in which the entities are seen as oppositional (rather than as complementary) and exclusive (rather than as inclusive) and that which place higher value (status, prestige) on one entity rather than the other; (3) logic of domination that is structured around the argument which provides justification for subordination of one entity by the other (Tong, 2009: 237). Essentially, these tenets concern with the 'abuse' and 'subordination' women suffer from their men counterpart as a result of the patriarchy's hierarchy, value dualism and socio-cultural dichotomy that are prevalent in a typical modern society.

The underlying reasoning in this connection is that man as the lord of nature is not only superior to woman (in which sense, women have been naturalised), but that he also has dominion

over nature in the form of conquest and mining (in which sense, nature has been feminised) (Plumwood, 2004: 44). Hence, it is very likely that woman and nature are treated alike given “that the hatred of women, which *ipso facto* brings about that of nature, is one of the principal mechanisms governing the actions of men (of ‘males’) and, thus, the whole of Western/patriarchal culture” (Tong, 2009: 243). Many ecofeminists admit that there exists a direct link between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature (Tong, 2009: 242). This brings to focus the interconnection between women’s agricultural role that is largely underestimated at least economically compared to androcentric agriculture (feminist perspective) and climate change/mineral extraction of which men are seen as the main cause (ecological perspective), which this paper seeks to address. Equally of importance in this regard is the ecofeminists' position that women, more than men, are engaged in subsistence agriculture. Also, women, more than men, are concerned about natural elements such as air (clean), water (fresh), earth (fertile soil and lush plant life), necessary conditions for bringing up healthy children, as well as providing for their families with nourishing food, adequate clothing and sturdy housing (Tong, 2009: 261)

Eco-feminism advocates for an ecological sensibility which insists that a truly human life is embedded in both nature and culture which are not so classed and subjected to much the same abuse and opposed treatment as women and nature (Plumwood, 2004: 51). Certainly not in the sense in which transformative-socialist/ecofeminists proposed a general subsistence perspective (agriculture inclusive) as a key solution to all the practices and systems that threaten to destroy the earth (Tong, 2009: 264). This paper is of the view that the subsistence agricultural role of women in Africa should be accorded top priority as an important contributor not only to national economies but socio-cultural well-being of citizens across the continent as well. It is also germane to point out that this paper does not assume ecofeminism (including the two identified perspectives) as one without some limitations both in their theoretical analyses and application. For instance, while nature ecofeminists have been criticised for over-celebrating nature-woman connection, thereby limiting their potentials and abilities to those associated with their supposedly "caring nature," socio-cultural ecofeminists have been attacked for assuming too much given in their attempt to de-link women from nature (Gaard, 2011: 32; Tong, 2009: 265-267). These limitations are well acknowledged.

Women and Agribusiness in Africa

Women constitute more than half of the world's human resources, and occupy a central position regarding the socio-economic well-being of societies (Snyder and Tadesse, 1995: 6). As discussed above, the general image of women in Africa is that of domestic workers. These roles are unpaid for, and therefore hardly accounted for in monetary terms. Lindsey (1997: 127) points out that "these roles are vital to the well-being of the society but undervalued and unpaid. Yet such roles consume half of the time and energy of women." Most cultures in Africa view women’s role as subordinate to that of men. This is concretised through Islamic (purdah culture), traditional (animism) and Christian religions that all see women as playing second fiddle roles until recently. As discussed elsewhere, African traditions see women as commodity that may be sold, bought and discarded off at will (Amusan, 2014: 5925). This explains partly why issues of their community are beyond their areas of involvement forgetting that they are the ones that know the environment better as they always go to bush to fetch wood for cooking and travel several kilometres in many cases to fetch water for the family. Unfortunately, when it comes to the issue of project allocation such as boreholes, community commodes and the likes, the men folks that hardly feel the brunt of

keeping the home-front are usually contacted by relevant stakeholders. At the same time, despite the fact that the several roles accorded to women are unpaid, they also face series of domestic violence such as beating, sexual and molestation from their male counterpart, only because they are biologically different from men (Giddens, 2009: 344-349). In this situation, women suffer from various forms of exclusion, discrimination, and inequality and are relegated to second citizen because they are born women (Cohn, 2013: 3).

The matter is further worsened by the state through its systematic marginalisation of women, a situation that has given rise to feminist movement calling for gender mainstreaming in key governmental and non-governmental activities with a view to incorporating women into a wider array of socio-economic aspects of societal life. South Africa and Namibia, probably because of their apartheid history, made issues of sexism and gender part of their constitutional rights; on the other hand, Uganda, Ethiopia and Egypt spoke of non-discrimination based on sexism but silence on the issue of gender rights. Also of importance are the rights of the indigenous peoples that are daily violated by nearly every African state with special focus on women and their children? This is common in Gabon, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Cameroon, South Africa and Congo (ILO/ACHPR, 2009: 126). Introduction of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), euphemistic of imposed structural adjustment programme (SAP), vitiated whatever constitution of South Africa imposed on government concerning gender equality (Budlender, 2001: 337-338).

As argued, marginalisation creates vulnerability and insecurity (Anugwom, 2011: 246). Women's vulnerability and powerlessness against oppressive men is a common feature of African life. Their vulnerability is characteristically exposed in many aspects of societal life. The economic crisis in most African states though exposes every citizen to the resultant challenges like poverty and general poor conditions of life, it affects women most seriously (Snyder and Tadesse, 1995: 5). Similarly, in situations of resource-induced governance crisis and political instability resulting in civil unrest, and in extreme cases, war and state implosion, for which the continent is well known, women no doubt suffer most from their after effects. Not only are women vulnerable to the eventualities of such crises, but are also at the receiving end of the negative fall-outs including sexual abuses like rape and other forms of sexual harassment, human right violations, discrimination, military brutality, displacement and refuge-taking, trafficking, flogging, maiming, kidnapping, killing, arson and destruction of personal property (Akubor, 2011: 27; Odoemene, 2011a; Odoemene, 2011b). Olankunle (2010: 133) put it more succinctly that "women lose virtually everything from property to life." Besides, women constitute majority of the poor populace and illiterate adults in Africa. In some instances, women are forced to assume dual roles of both father and mother parenting, thereby proliferating matriarchal households in many African states. This not only reduces their production activities in the form of farming, fishing and animal husbandry, it also, in most occasions, aggravates existing level of poverty in many ways. Taking care of the sick from terminal conditions/diseases such as HIV/AIDs, TB and other incurable diseases shortens the number of hours they spend on food production. As much as it is given that man should provide for the family, because of their nature of keeping more than a family, there is less care for the children in a polygyny environment (Amusan, 2014: 5925).

It is a well-known fact that Africa as a continent has huge agricultural potentials (Rosario, 2016: 58-59). With relatively large proportion of its landmass as arable land and other agro-based natural resources like water, the continent is no doubt one of the richest sources for agricultural growth in the world. However, this agricultural potential is yet to be fully unlocked. Given its agricultural resource-based, and to mitigate some of the familiar challenges that nature entrusts on

women, most of them engage in subsistence farming as a means of livelihood. In addition, they also engage in trading in foodstuffs and other agricultural related small businesses like fish and dry meat trading. This is particularly true of less privileged women in the rural areas who actually contend with the everyday challenge of taking care of their families. They represent majority of people living in abject poverty worldwide, but ironically account for more than half of the world's food production (Lindsey, 1997: 127). According to Akubor (2011: 27), this agricultural role of women constitutes 60 to 80 per cent of the agricultural labour force and accounts for 90 per cent of family food supply.

Women farmers hardly own land for cultural reasons, and they also lack access to technological resources needed to ease the burdens of their agricultural role for lack of collateral security to access funds from financial institutions. Inheritance of property is considered to be for male children in a family, and women and girls are considered to be outsiders in their parents' houses (Lee-Smith and Trujillo, 2006: 161-163). On the other hand, when they eventually get married, some parts of Africa, for example, the Igbo speaking people in Nigeria believe that a widow should either move out of her late husband's house or she constitutes inheritance to the family with no say in her husband's property. As if this is not enough culturally, in the Islamic world, it is stated in the Holy Quran (Chapter 2 verse 223) that a woman is a tilth which implies that one should tender her and nurture her against any abuse. Unfortunately, they are relegated to a second citizen when one looks into how they are perceived, even in the Mosque and other activities within the religion. From Christianity perspective, some dogmatic churches still see women as a second fiddle only to listen to the preaching of men and *strictosensus* abide by men's directive as the head of a family.

This unequal relationship continues to checkmate the activities of women when it comes to property accessibility and by extension engaging in productive farming. Their capacity, therefore, is at the lowest run of the ladder as many women farmers also do not have the required skills to effectively perform as agricultural workers even at the subsistence level. Given that women farmers, especially in the rural areas are mostly illiterate adults, they also face the challenge of lack of access to micro-credit facilities and other state interventions fillips in the form of assistance to farmers to boost agricultural productivity, thereby ensuring national food security. It is worth noting that credit facility as mentioned here is not the 'rogue capitalists inspired' that perpetuates poverty among the poor, but that of Muhammad Yunus of the Grameen Bank and Sir Fazle Hasan Abed of BRAC in India and Bangladesh respectively (Chang, 2010: 160-162; Hirschmann, 2006: 71-86; Stiglitz, 2013: 246). Without all these supports, and in particular access to skills, financial aid and resources, women's labour would remain unproductive and exhausting (Snyder and Tadesse, 1995: 61). They would continue to depend on government handouts and foreign donors whose generosity is not altruistic, but a continuation of exploitation because foreign aid is a foreign raid.

The situation points to the fact that as important as the involvement of women in small-scale backyard farming is not only to the economic well-being of the family, but also to the society as a whole, it is hardly acknowledged as a vital socio-economic growth denominator. In most cases, because of lack of enough land for women to till due to land accessibility challenges, they may not be able to engage in cash crop farming of long term gestation period. Instead they embark on food crops of short term maturity. As much as there is no incentive for women in embarking on large scale farming until recently due to the introduction of willing-seller-willing-buyer principles in most of the capitalist states, women were forced to embark on organic food production. The implication of this is that introduction of genetically modified (GM) food that is

confirmed to be harmful for human health may not be consumed by household. As much as this is a right direction to stay healthy, it is a source of economic underdevelopment in tune with the globalisation principles that called for large scale food production for the teeming population caused because of development in technology and very low mortality rate on the continent. In other words, the important role of women as primary natural resource managers is to a large extent trivialised. Lindsey (1997: 128) rightly observed that "the subsistence farming roles of women have been de-emphasised if not (totally) ignored in evaluating labour force activities in the Third World, development policies have also largely ignored their contributions as well" despite what Ha-Joon Chang (2010:34-36) describes as washing machine age that released many women into previously men's areas of jurisdiction in term of job opportunity and normal house chores.

Impacts of Climate Change on the Agricultural Role of Women

Climate change poses, perhaps, the greatest problem to humanity in the contemporary world (Nachmany, et al., 2014: xiii). Its impacts transcend socio-economic concerns to include ecological aspects of human life with direct effects on agricultural sector. Stern (2012) contends that climate change is not just a conventional environmental issue - it implicates virtually every aspect of national economies. These, among others, include industry, energy, transportation, ecosystems, water, agriculture and forests (Stern, 2012; Karl et al., 2009). Arguably, agriculture and water are the two most-sensitive sectors affected by climate variability (UNDP, 2013; Nwangi, 2010). Developing countries, many of which are found on the African continent, that contribute less to climate change suffer more from its adverse impacts due to a number of factors. Key amongst which include extreme poverty, a high rate of population increase, frequent natural disasters, rain-fed agricultural practices and low adaptive capacity (Adano and Daudi, 2012; AGI, 2014; Lalthapersad-Pillay and Udjo, 2014; Mwiturubani and Wyk, 2010). The implication is that climate change will have major ramifications for the continent's agriculture, especially in the form of reduced agricultural productivity.

Though global actions on climate change through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 1992), Kyoto Protocol (KP, 1997) and Conference Of Parties (COPs) climate meetings including the latest Paris Agreement (PA, 2015) are still on, GHGEs have continued unabated with negative implications on women in the long run (Coll, 2012: 184-185). Worst still, poor and marginalised people, especially women and children, mostly from Africa that are most exposed and vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change have been largely underrepresented concerning climate change issues at the global, regional and national levels. Only until 2007 at the Bali climate summit, when the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) was formed to address the concern of women for the first time. Despite this, gender is considered mainly through the mentioning of women as a particularly vulnerable group (Kaijsera and Kronsell, 2014: 427). Increase in the sea level, heat waves, draught and flooding due to the interplay of *El Nina* and *El Nino* are some of the attributes of climate change that always destroy farmland tendered by women for the survival of their families. Obviously, the lack of access to 'new' technologies to mitigate the accruing challenges of climate change will further exacerbate the burden of women's role in subsistence agriculture, and therefore relegate them more domestically to the background as 'full' mothers, housewives and housemaids, with marginal or no contribution to the economic well-being of the family and the society at large. It is also very likely that they will depend more on their men counterpart financially and economically since they are seen as family heads in the patriarchal sense. However, women and girls activities that are not

factored in the GDP of a state are no more than underestimation of a state's productive sector. African women impact on what is described as 'hidden'/'shadow' or second economy contributes, in a sustainable manner, to the continent's food security and general economic development. Even in the formal economy that is tasking, demanding more hours with little opportunity for upward mobility, women can hardly compete with men (Leach, 1999: 46). Therefore, as both domestic and agricultural workers, among other socio-economic engagements, women's role remains a critical factor to most economies in Africa.

The import of the agricultural role of women in addressing sustainable development on the continent is also apt. Even though food production by women is not calculated in a state production, at the same time, it contributes, in no small measure, to sustainability based on its quality and easy accessibility by the rural dwellers. Thus, the continued undervaluing of women's agricultural role in the midst of the climate change challenges will simply imply that this important role will be greatly impaired. The end results of this are hunger, diseases of different kinds, drought, famine and water-born related ailments and submergence of many civilisations with special focus on low lie littoral states such as parts of Mauritius, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Mozambique, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, and the Gambia to mention but a few (Amusan, 2009: 22; 2011; Amusan and Jegede, 2014). Perpetuation of this vicious circle ensues as a result of lack of adequate data and weather forecast that may guide women in their food production. They only rely on traditional weather reading that may not be adequate in the era of climate change (Jerven, 2015: 113). Therefore, it is necessary for government to embark on training of women in the form of capacity building by agric-extension officers who are familiar with environment under which these farmers operate (Leach, 1999: 50). Also of relevance is the need to familiarise them with climate change and its implications on their occupation so as to avoid crop failure and loss of animals to drought. Supporting this with education will enhance women in control of income with improved multiplier effects on "infant mortality declines, child health and nutrition, agricultural productivity, economies and broken cycles of poverty" (Coleman, 2010: 13).

Mineral Extraction and Subsistence Agriculture

Linked to climate change, mineral extraction in the form of mining of coal, crude oil, gold and other world's most valuable natural endowments contributes significantly to environmental degradation and pollution. Large amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂) as a major composite of GHGs associated with global warming are released into the atmosphere in the process of mineral extraction. When competition was at its nadir for sphere of influence, industrialisation began in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt and many other African states through mineral extraction largely promoted by multinational companies (MNCs) with the introduction of unsustainable technologies that have become a vampire hunting the very survival of Africa till date. Apart from agriculture, many African states also depend on mineral resources as major drivers of their economies as the continent is richly endowed in varied natural and mineral resources. The extraction of these minerals take place but at a huge cost socially, economically and environmentally to the host states. Mineral extraction produces a lot of environmental problems with serious implications for agriculture. These range from pollution (air, water and noise), land and soil damage, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, conflict over land use, eviction, labour hazards and health risks among others. In the situation, the obvious fact remains that the externalised socio-economic and environmental consequences of mineral extraction will affect agricultural activities in no small proportion. Mineral extraction often results in destruction of farmlands, and other

potentially deleterious consequences for wild and marine lives (Amusan, 2014; Badmus, 2010; Egwemi, 2010; Mähler, 2010). Hence, extraction industries development is another out-and-out source of women challenges in food production in many parts of Africa. When a valuable mineral is discovered by the MNCs at commercial quantity, government's eviction of population around the place with relevant legislative acts will follow with less compensation to the affected communities. This is prevalent where indigenous peoples are located as the case in Botswana against the Basarwa ("Bushmen") because of large scale food production and diamond extraction. Though in 2015, there was a ruling promoted by the Friend of the Earth in the Netherland that such human right abuses may be brought to The Hague, the question is that how can the poor with less information about this go to The Hague to launch their grievances? Besides, as development proceeds, women are denied access to productive resources and new technologies," which in turn, "serves to lower their relative, if not absolute productivity" (Lindsey, 1997: 127). More than men, women are more negatively impacted as their engagement in subsistence agriculture is a source of employment for them. Farming becomes more difficult for them while poverty will prevail as sources of food and income may be in a total halt. This is especially the case when one looks into employment opportunity role that agriculture plays among the rural dwellers, where the bulk of the continent's citizenry reside. A government that ignores this is at its own peril, of which is common among African states. This explains why many communities in extractive states such as South Africa, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Angola and South Sudan remain poor coupled with pockets of protest by the communities concerned. Extractive industries such as cement companies bring about ailment from environmental pollution in the era of limited state with unlimited quest (Amusan and Oyewole, 2012). The situation also describes partly why oil production in riverine areas of Sao Tome e Principe, Nigeria's Niger Delta and Gabon eludes fisher women of their traditional roles as food provider. Not only that it affects aqua occupation, it is also impacts on sedentary farming farmlands that are lost to water and land pollution from oil multinationals activities coupled with climate change effects in some littoral areas (Amusan, 2011). Women not only suffer loss of farmlands due to explorative activities, their economic survival and that of the family is also seriously threatened. The likely implications are among others: food insecurity, increased general poverty, increased unemployment, forced rural-urban migration, high incidence of HIV/AIDS and other curable/terminal diseases often associated with poverty, hunger and suffering.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Women represent an important social segment of any society. They function in many different ways that are critical to the survival of the family and its economic well-being. In line with JS Mill as quoted from Amusan (2014: 5925), "what is now called nature is an eminently artificial thing—the result of forced oppression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others". Aside performing the roles of mothers, wives and housemaids, most women particularly in the rural areas engage in subsistence farming as a means of livelihood. However, this important agricultural role of women has been looked down upon despite its contribution to the socio-economic growth and development of many African states. Agriculture and mineral resources are key major drivers of economies on the continent. While climate change portends serious ramifications for agriculture as the most climate change-sensitive sector, the extraction of mineral resources produces even more damaging effects. In other words, the agricultural role of women majorly in subsistence farming faces daunting challenges arising from climate change-induced stresses on the one hand, and untoward externalities of extractive activities on the other. To say

the least, the agricultural role of women in terms of their subsistence economic life is direly threatened. Cultural practice and patriarchal system deny women access to agricultural inputs and credit facilities. This no doubt implies additional pressure on food production generally, thereby constituting more threats to the socio-economic well-being of familial and societal lives in many African states.

To remedy the situation, a number of measures needs to be considered, undertaken, and prioritised at the individual African state's level. More attention needs to be given to the agricultural role of women as important to national economic growth and development. The aim is to encourage the involvement of more women in subsistence farming, and also to guarantee food production and consumption for domestic purposes. Doing this will serve multipurpose objectives, including encouraging organic food production with less pressure on foreign exchange in terms of food importation that continues to drain many African states' financial resources partly based on the imported Euro-centric international trade that reduced the continent to the producer of industrial inputs with neglect in the production of food. This is as opined by Jerven (2015: 131), "most models of economic development are derived from studies of Europe and the West, the tool box of economists is conceptually Eurocentric." Adhering to this will enhance a state prestige in the comity of nations. It is also important to train and empower women through formal and informal education, both in subsistence farming and commercial agriculture as a strategy for achieving national food security, since agriculture is the mainstay of most economies on the continent. The training and empowerment may also come through women's cooperatives in agribusiness though with more supports from the state. This may be in the form of provision of extension services as against the present theorised extension activities of relevant ministries' that are riddled with corruption. Governments' intervention will also be needed to work out easy credit arrangements for women in agriculture through relevant formal institutions like Bank of Agriculture (BoA) and microfinance at a zero or single digit interest rate, as well as provision of insurance cover to manage any associated risks with regard to the agricultural role of women. As discussed above, women in many African societies are relegated to an instrument of men, a helper, a mother, a domestic worker and an object of every violence practice. Through cooperative associations specifically to empower women who are naturally care-takers and administrators, availability of Yunus Mohammed's financial support in rural areas will boost crop and animal production with positive implications on standard of living, sustainable development and food security.

Moreover, new and women friendly technologies should be made available at little or no cost to women farmers at all levels to reduce their burden as a socially vulnerable group, and more importantly to enable them mitigate and adapt effectively to the impacts of climate change and other resource-related ecological challenges. In addition to this, efforts need to be made in extending adaptation technology to women farmers through distribution of weather forecasting devices, as well as allocation of extension agents to assist in interpreting weather information to enable them to make appropriate decisions concerning farm operations. Besides, agricultural cropping calendar should be produced in their local dialects and distributed to them freely to aid their knowledge of appropriate and best agricultural practices. Lastly, gender mainstreaming in all agricultural activities at all levels should be vigorously pursued.

From the foregoing, it is anticipated that the measures, if faithfully implemented, will strengthen the role of women as food producers at the subsistence level; engender gender equality in agriculture; and more importantly, increase their income generating ability to contribute both to the socio-economic well-being of the family and the society as a whole. There is a need to take

hard look into these so as to ensure sustainable development and, in the long run, ensure political stability, as food security is a *sine qua non* for a stable society. Not too far from this position is a need to involve women in decision-making at the grassroots level. Because of culture as practised in many of African settings, women may not be allowed to get involved in critical decision-making. This is not only against gender equality and basic human rights; it also violates tenets of value allocation as discussed above.

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