



POLICY BRIEF

SPEAK OUT: Voices from the FARM



HEARD AFRICA

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FEBURARY 2023 VOL.1

BACKGROUND

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) or Gender-based violence is a global pandemic that affects 1 in 3 women in their lifetime¹. According to United Nation reports, Violence against women and girls is any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm, or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life². A staggering data of 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence³.

In Nigeria, at least 30% of women and girls experience sexual violence, while 48%⁴ experience one form of violence or the other, a condition further exacerbated by COVID-19 and insurgency in the Northeast. VAWG manifests in various forms ranging from physical, sexual, and psychological to economic violence. Studies identified factors that drive violence against women and girls to include Cultural, Legal, Economic, and Political factors. The deeply rooted patriarchal system in Nigeria largely promotes gender injustices which are further encouraged by traditional and religious dogma that seeks to blame women to justify every action by perpetrators. The cultural factor remains a foundation upon which other factors are laid.

“In terms of processing facilities across the 36 states and FCT, women who are the smallholders of farms have access to only 18%; in terms of storage facilities 16%; market access is quite low, transportation is less than 10%; 50% in terms of access to land and access is not controlled. It could be leasing or renting. Ownership is just about twenty – something percent.”

ActionAid Nigeria

Research has shown that the significant drivers of violence against women and girls include the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women. Economic deprivation makes women and girls more vulnerable to other factors or forms of violence in their various work-life sectors. Exclusion and denial of women to access, own or inherit land,

² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialsustainability/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls>

² <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialsustainability/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls>

² <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/497159-48-of-nigerian-women-experienced-violence-since-covid-19-pandemic-un-report.html>

and restricted access to credit facilities and agricultural resources are some of the violation's women experience as farmers.

Thereby limiting the ability of young and adult women farmers to adequately contribute to the advancement of food security and attainment of their potential within their lifetime, all because they are born women. It is therefore to this end; we highlight the importance of ending all forms of violence against women and girls within the agricultural value chain as a pathway towards sustainable food security.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Agribusiness is a driving force of economic growth, food security, health, employment, and exports in many developing countries. Globally, agricultural workers constitute 1 billion or one-third of the world's workforce. Women make up half of the workforce around the world

while some regions record as high as 70 percent, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa⁵.



In Nigeria, women account for 75-80 percent of the farming population, working as casual workers, farm managers, and suppliers of labor⁶. They are involved at different levels across value chains which include aggregator & distributor, logistics, processing, market access, and trading. These women

experience one form of violence or another particularly, discrimination in access to finance, inputs, information and training, and land.

Statistics show that there has been a constant decrease in Federal Government funding for women in agribusiness dropping from 657,705 million in 2017 to 416,593 million naira in 2021⁷. This reflects the level of commitment and investment placed on women by the government across all tiers of governance. This also encapsulates the income earned by

⁶ <https://sahelconsult.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Sahel-Newsletter-Volume-7.pdf#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Federal%20Ministry,and%20suppliers%20of%20la%2D%20bour.>

women from the sector in a country with 63% of her citizen being multidimensionally poor⁸. The economic violence faced by female farmers as mentioned above includes;

- **Access To Finance:** Bulk buying is one that would boost the income of women, but bulk buying of food products is capital intensive, and due to low access to funding, women are restricted from bulk buying so this part of the value chain remains largely male-dominated. In addition, middlemen are mostly men across the value chain. The percentage of women in this value chain is far less compared to that of men as they find it harder to break into the market. This has been attributed largely to limited education, funds, and low social status.
- **Access To Inputs:** Due to poor financing and a poor policy environment, women are unable to access agricultural inputs such as improved seedlings and fertilizer. Women farmers have indicated that they are unable to use inputs due to high costs in the open market.
- **Access To Land:** Women in Nigeria generally own less land due to traditional authority. According to the 2012 'Gender in Nigeria' report by the British Council, women own 4% of land in the North-East, and just over 10% in the South-East and South-South, less than 10% of Nigerian women own land. Thus, the lack of land ownership significantly reduces the chances for women's access to financing because of the need for collateral.
- **Access to information and training:** Women's participation in farmer training is low due to the lack of awareness, social barriers, and transportation facilities. Cultural norms restrict women from accessing ICT. Furthermore, Gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) is a systemic form of labor abuse that intersects with other forms of abuse within the sector. GBVH poses a high risk due to huge female workforce forces in the sector.
- **In farming and primary production,** female agricultural workers suffer verbal and physical abuse from supervisors in order to increase productivity or meet seasonal deadlines. Women employed through third party contractors face even worse as they are paid a paltry amount with no job security. Some may exchange sexual favor for

job security. Women are often silenced or forced to tolerate harassment to obtain or keep employment or prevent the withholding of wages. Agricultural work can often be in remote, rural locations, increasing the opportunities for men to perpetrate sexual assault and harassment. Reporting becomes an issue where there is limited or non-availability of GBVH services.



- **In logistics and distribution:** The transportation of agricultural products in Nigeria is exclusively male dominated. Women are involved in the sale of packaging materials used for most crops and processed foods. Male drivers transporting agricultural goods over long distances can pose a risk of perpetrating GBVH on routes and at truck stops along the way, particularly if they are traveling through poor and remote communities. Child and adolescent sexual exploitation tend to be common with male drivers on roadways and truck stops.
- **In processing and packing stages** of agribusiness, male are usually supervisors and oversee the process including control decisions on work performance. Female workers often nurse the fear of pay-cut or job loss if they refuse request for sexual favors.

POLICY OPTIONS

This policy instruments are available to decision-makers to eliminate gender bases violence and gaps in agricultural productivity among small-scale farmers.

1. Increase 2023 budgetary allocation
 - Increased budgetary allocation to women farmers in the 2023 budget across the tiers of government as a means of boosting women in agriculture.
 - Increase access to agricultural finance by agriculture agencies and departments
2. Subsidize agricultural input.

- The access to fertilizer is a barrier for women smallholders. So, a policy instrument to ensure that women and girls in agribusiness have access to inputs subsidized by the government without being discriminated against
3. Improve land use Act by the government
 - A policy instrument for the government to review the land use Act and issue of female land inheritance
 - Increase access of women and girls to have control over their land and natural resources
 4. Increase access of women and girls to Technology
 - Technology designed must be womanly enough to enable every female farmer who has access to technology to understand and use them with minimal or no risk whatsoever.
 - Improve female farmers knowledge and skills by organizing a cohort for various agribusinesses and value chain.
 - Organize a capacity building exercise for them to have ample time for preparation and plan to attend.
 5. Ensure female farmers have access to GBV grievance redress mechanisms in a timely manner.

POLICY APPROACHES

Improve the participation of women at all levels of society;

A. Sensitize national stakeholders to the importance of women participation

- Support women networks to build technical and financial capacities
- Ensure that national development programmes and projects have budgets as well as outcome data on women as a specific target group
- Facilitate the formation of networks of women representatives
- Ensure the voices of women networks are part of policy debates
- Ensure that women are an integral part of debates, not just on women issues but on national development issues in general.

B. Include women in consultation processes

- Facilitate the involvement of women development programmes and projects, from design to implementation and monitoring and evaluation
- Consult ministries of youth, agriculture, labor, education and community development in design, implementation and review of national development programmes and projects.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We, however, see the need for more actions and efforts to be channeled towards ending the gender-based violence that is silently flourishing within the agriculture ecosystem.

Based on the foregoing, we therefore recommend that.

- Increased budgetary allocation to women farmers in the 2023 budget across the tiers of government as a means of boosting women in agriculture.
- Deliberate efforts are made by relevant ministries, departments and agencies of agriculture to ensure that the percentage of agricultural finance meant for women and girls be monitored and ensured that they are accessed by them.
- Strengthen the policy environment through the sustained implementation of Agricultural sector gender policy, and adoption by various states.
- Although the government is believed to subsidize agricultural inputs, there is a need to also ensure that women and girls in agribusiness have access to inputs subsidized by the government without being discriminated against.
- There is a need, as a matter of urgency, for the government to review the land use Act and issue of female land inheritance to assist women and girls to have access to and control over their land and natural resources.
- Technology design must be womanly enough to enable every female farmer who has access to technology to understand and use them with minimal or no risk whatsoever. In addition, cohorts of female farmers in various agribusinesses and value chain must be informed well ahead of any training or capacity-building exercise for them to have ample time for preparation and plan to attend.
- In addressing GBVH in the sector, investors need to make efforts to recruit and retain female workers who might be wary about GBVH risks, as well as attract women into roles that have male dominance.
- Ensure female farmers have access to GBV grievance redress mechanisms in a timely manner.

Acknowledgement

This policy brief is a product of the Media Round Table on Addressing Gender inequality against women and girls in Agricultural Sector. Tagged "Speak Out: Voices from the Farm" organized by **Health Education Agriculture Development Africa Initiative (HEARD Africa)** in collaboration with Centre for Accountability and Inclusive Development (CAAID), Development Initiative for Community Enhancement (DICE), and Initiative for African Society Inclusion and Diversity for Development (INCLUD Africa). We acknowledge the support of staff members of these organizations, the media, women farmers representative and the agricultural sector associations represented.

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