Faculty ICT Coordinator,

From the SelectedWorks of Dr Williams Emeka Obiozor

November 26, 2012

Women, Education & the Diaspora

Dr Williams Emeka Obiozor, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka-Nigeria

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/drwilliams_obiozor/24/
ABSTRACT

Educating the woman is a challenge to many governments in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria where successive governments have made efforts to promote and support women education and bridging the gender gap in the education, labor and economic sector. This position paper examined issues and challenges of women regarding education and the Diaspora: An experience coming from a Nigerian-American who spent more than a decade living and working in the United States of America. Motivations for leaving an individuals’ homeland are as varied as the immigrants themselves, especially women who leave for opportunity, some for adventure, education, marriage and some to escape oppressive conditions which threaten their rights and lives. Women migrant workers in America on the other hand, whether documented or undocumented, are much more vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and abuse. Gender-based discrimination intersects with discrimination based on non-national status, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status – placing women migrants in conditions of racial profiling, discrimination, economically disadvantaged or vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. Through the triangulation process, the author gathered vital research materials for the paper with suggestions for effective reforms and adult education strategies for preparing Nigerian women for better life within and outside Nigeria were provided.
Key words: Adult Culture Diaspora Education Immigration Labor Nigeria Women

INTRODUCTION

"Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process." —ICPD Programme of Action, paragraph 4.2 (UNFPA, 2012)

As the world becomes a global village, courtesy of the rigorous research, technology, educational pursuits and innovative practices in developed and developing societies, the education and development of women becomes imperative because they play significant roles towards the growth of every nation. The globalisation trend presents education as participatory development process whereby innovative activities are packaged to foster global cooperation, mutual understanding and knowledge, adoption of technology for skill development, productivity and collective self-awareness by the citizens, irrespective of gender or nationality. In all these areas of life, women education enables the acquisition of the ability to think and develop skills to deal with challenging female issues in the society, have an understanding of the concept of learning, career, domestic and civic responsibilities, human rights, literacy, health, nutrition, vocational training and other responsibilities in relation to global conditions, in a participatory democracy. Thus, women education becomes significant to global peace and stability, a continuous process for citizenship sustainability for the woman.

Training of women all over the world creates opportunities for them to learn and acquire skills, become self-reliant and live better within and outside their country. Furthermore, the essence of educating the women is for positive changes to occur in their lives and that of their
family members who strive hard to support them in different ways. Such challenging efforts take a lot to accomplish by parents, families, community and the government because investment in women education sustains every society. All efforts directed at women development are in line with the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Developing Goals (MDGs) stipulated by the United Nations for developing nations.

The post-independence urban and rural woman in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Nigeria have been subjugated to different conditions in their homes and community; some are presently faced with cultural, economic, human rights, social, political and democratic challenges with their male counterparts. As a woman in Africa, performing domestic chores, career and civic responsibilities comes with a number of challenges and opportunities, while the aspect of migration to foreign lands in search of greener pastures, education or marital relationships create more concerns to advocates of women’s rights, justice and empowerment. These issues and others, form the significant focus for this discussion on women, education and Diaspora as they relate to the Nigerian woman.

Nigeria is globally regarded as the world’s most populous Black nation which is located in West African region, and is the 14th largest country in Africa with greatest diversity of cultures, ways of life, cities and terrain; large crude oil reserves, abundant mineral resources, among other unique national features (Adalikwu, 2007; en.wikipedia, 2010), as cited in Obiozor, (2012b). Nigeria gained independence in 1960 from Great Britain; although there has been wide discrepancies in estimates of the total population of Nigeria but the latest IMF World Development Indicators put Nigeria's population at 162.47 million in 2011 (Obiozor, 2012b).
The World view and Data Profile of Nigeria as it relates to her nationhood, people and economy is presented in Table 1: 
Table 1: Nigeria data Profile: 2000 – 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>World view</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population, total (millions)</td>
<td>123.69</td>
<td>139.82</td>
<td>150.67</td>
<td>154.49</td>
<td>158.42</td>
<td>162.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population growth (annual %)</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line (% of population)</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNI per capita, PPP (current international $)</td>
<td>1,140</td>
<td>1,540</td>
<td>1,990</td>
<td>2,040</td>
<td>2,140</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income share held by lowest 20%</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy at birth, total (years)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertility rate, total (births per woman)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraceptive prevalence (% of women ages 15-49)</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births attended by skilled health staff (% of total)</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortality rate, under-5 (per 1,000 live births)</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malnutrition prevalence, weight for age (% of children under 5)</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunization, measles (% of children ages 12-23 months)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary completion rate, total (% of relevant age group)</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary education (%)</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of HIV, total (% of population ages 15-49)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP (current US$) (billions)</td>
<td>45.98</td>
<td>112.25</td>
<td>207.12</td>
<td>168.57</td>
<td>196.84</td>
<td>235.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP growth (annual %)</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation, GDP deflator (annual %)</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>-4.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net migration (thousands)</td>
<td>-95</td>
<td>-170</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paper on “Women, Education and the Diaspora: Using Adult Education for Empowerment of Nigerian Women in America” by Dr. Williams Emeka Obiozor
What is Education for?

Education is meant for all and sundry. Thus, all human beings, irrespective of gender, race or other affiliations deserve the right to education and development. Education is a tool which is needed in every country to develop the individual citizen, to match government’s efforts in human capacity development and community improvement strides. According to Jones (2012), education does not have a single purpose; it serves multiple objectives, and the relative importance of each of these objectives can be very personal. Jones opined further that the varied emphasis on education is a result of the diverse economic, social, spiritual, cultural, and political realities of our individual lives. Likewise, how we deliver instruction, and how we measure success in school as a predictive indicator of our future success in society and, indeed, one could argue the metrics for society’s success as a whole, must be updated to match. Today, a successful member of society must bring something different to the table.

Education involves the inculcation of positive experiences, knowledge, right attitudes, values and training of individuals to become productive and compete globally. The focus of all educational efforts is on imparting knowledge for individual acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence for her development and livelihood. The United Nations’ Child Education Fund (UNICEF, 2006) asserted that education is a fundamental right for all - children, youths, adults, boys, girls, men and women.
Several writers, authors and researchers have defined or provided the meaning of *Education* in many ways which are presented by Definitions (2012), as follows:

1. Education is the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge and of developing the powers of reasoning and judgment.
2. The act or process of imparting or acquiring particular knowledge or skills, as for a profession.
3. A degree, level, or kind of schooling: a college education.
4. The result produced by instruction, training, or study.
5. The science or art of teaching; pedagogics.
6. The gradual process of acquiring knowledge - "education is a preparation for life";
7. Education, training, breeding - the result of good upbringing (especially knowledge of correct social behavior) "a woman of breeding and refinement".

Over the decades, the following have all been goals of education (Jones, 2012):

- To prepare children for citizenship
- To cultivate a skilled workforce
- To teach cultural literacy
- To help students become critical thinkers
- To help students compete in a global marketplace

Aside from the general definitions and meanings of education, what about *Women Education*?

**What is the Purpose of Women Education?**

As far as this author is concerned, women education goes beyond imparting knowledge to the women. The knowledge transcends every facet of societal life which the women play pivotal roles. It is about training or preparing the female learner for survival, transcending many areas of...
life ranging from awareness of her environment, acquisition of vocational skills, understanding and exercising her reproductive rights, engage in a career, become productive and support her family and community. Women education is about teaching women lifelong values, discipline, and the ability to explore new ideas and to think and act independently in the society. Women education is all about **women empowerment** in the 21st Century and beyond.

The Worlded.org explained that women's empowerment could be briefly explained as the process of improving the human capital of women for effective participation in all aspects of development of a nation. This will make women become makers of development and history, not just receivers or objects of it. Women need not be just objects or beneficiaries of development but the development process of a nation needs the equal participation of women as well. Given that women form over 50% of the world population, their capacity building is crucial for holistic development. Women's empowerment could also be said to comprise building their capacity or making the best of the lives of women for governance and socio-economic advancement. It is obvious that access to literacy or education, information or knowledge resources, natural or material resources, productive skills and capital facilitates the empowerment of women.

Thus, there are strong advocacy for **Nigerian women education and skill development training** in all areas - from basic education, secondary, tertiary to higher education, for the sole purpose of developing skillful minds to become culturally, economically and technologically empowered, to contribute to her development, productivity, self-sustenance and growth.
The Nigerian woman has encountered several challenges in order to access equal education and employment opportunities. It is pertinent to note that education is a basic human right which has been recognized globally since the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Worldbank (2010) observed that a positive correlation exists between the enrollment of girls in primary school and the gross national product and increase of life expectancy; and because of this correlation, argued Schultz (2002), enrollment in schools represents the largest component of the investment in human capital in any society. The investment on women education has been championed by developed nations like the United States where the women contribute immensely in the national economic development of the American society. Thus, rapid socio-economic development of a nation has been viewed by Nussbaum (2003), to depend on the calibre of women and their education in that country. This is because education bestows on women a disposition for a lifelong acquisition of knowledge, values, attitudes, competence and skills (Aliu, 2001).

Historically, Nigerian women since independence, has experienced gender disparity in education with low female enrollment throughout the 36 states of the nation. Even in the postwar Nigeria in the 1970s where the implementation of the free and compulsory Universal Primary Education (UPE) which was in line with the UN Plan; girls education was still neglected because there were more boys enrolled in the schools. Ever since, UNICEF and UNESCO and many other organizations have sponsored research and conferences within Nigeria regarding the education of girls (Wikipedia, 2012).
According to Kitetu (2001), the native traditions’ philosophy was that a woman’s place is at home and this kept many Nigerian girls away from education. However, with the government’s intervention and public awakening, parents began to send and keep their girl children in school. Consequently, women’s involvement in Nigerian polity became more visible, for instance, women activists and educators like, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Oyibo Odinammadu, Sarah Jubril, Prof. Grace Alele-Williams, Dr. Oby Ezekwesili, Ngozi Okonji-Iwuala, Kudirat Abiola, etc. The 1990s brought purposeful plans of action which led to an increase in female enrollment in schools. Kitetu added that while more boys than girls were enrolled in 1991, a difference of 138,000, by 1998 the difference was only 69,400. At the pan-African Conference held at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in March and April 1993 (three decades after the UN Declaration of the 1960s) it was observed that Nigeria was still lagging behind other regions of the world in female access to education. It was also noted that gender disparity existed in education and that there was need to identify and eliminate all policies that hindered girls’ full participation in education (Obasi, 1997). Since the millennium year, it seems the reverse is the case in many parts of the Nigeria where girls/women are working very hard to redefine themselves via massive enrollment in schools and challenging the males in academic achievements and global migration for job opportunities and better life.

Currently, Nigerian women are making much advancement within their society. In recent years, three male dominated professions, the Nigerian Medical Association, the Nigerian Bar Association and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, have been
led by female presidents (Anugwom, 2009). The subsequent creation of the National Commission for Women and a ministerial portfolio for Women Affairs provides additional avenues for the promotion of women’s educational issues and the enhancement of the role of women in national development by way of a statutory body and a Ministry (Anugwom, 2009).

In addition, states and local government areas across Nigeria have been appointing women commissioners and permanent secretaries to manage different ministries, as well as created ministries/units for Women Affairs to facilitate access to rural women and foster their development. Today, more children go to school and learn to read and write than in previous decades. As a result, younger persons are much more likely to be literate than older persons (Wikipedia, 2012). In a survey conducted by the International Education Statistics assessed the Nigerian literacy across different 5-year age groups. Among persons aged 15 to 19 years - those who were of primary school age in the 1990s - the literacy rate is 70%. Among persons 80 years or older, only 13% are literate. Additionally, the gap between boys and girls aged 15 to 19 is only 11% (Huebler, 2008).

Nigerian women’s access to formal education is still being constrained due to their unfair workload within the household division of labor. Consequently, the realization of the MDG3’s ‘gender equality and women empowerment’ targets is being impeded harshly (Opaluwah, 2007). Moreover according to Bhavani, Foran & Kurian (2003), such unequal social and gender relations needs to be transformed in order to take women out of want
and poverty, as well as eradicate the oppressive conditions they are being subjugated daily in different societies.

**Nigerian Women and the Diaspora:**

Every year, millions of people make difficult and often dangerous treks from their home countries to a new nation. Motivations for leaving are as varied as the immigrants themselves --- some leave for opportunity, some for adventure and some to escape oppressive regimes that threaten their rights or religions (Bowerman, 2012). There are Nigerian immigrants leaving for America yearly, especially women. The migrants comprised of those women tricked or forcibly removed from their homelands via trafficking, marriage, or in search of better life due to socioeconomic conditions. Investigating the causes of this immigration is an important step in understanding women and their struggles.

**Problem Identification and Educational Issues**

The term ‘Diaspora’ is derived from the Greek language which literally means, *the scattering or dispersion*. People who came from a particular nation, or whose ancestors came from it, but who now live in many different parts of the world are sometimes referred to as the diaspora. Typical examples are the history of peoples from the African diaspora. These people are scattered all over the world especially in the Americas, courtesy of the
cross-Atlantic Slave trade centuries ago. Today, there are several people of African origin whose ancestors equally settled in different regions of the globe – Americas, Scandinavia, Australia, Asia, Europe, to mention but a few. A good illustration of such settlers are Nigerians who could be found comfortably residing or settled in almost in any part of the world in search of greener pastures and their survival.

With Nigeria’s massive female population, the fast rate of human reproduction (child birth) and growth, coupled with successive inept and corrupt leadership since her statehood; life for the average Nigerian has been very tough and quite challenging – with poverty, hunger, disease, HIV-AIDS scourge, civil strife, flooding disaster, oil spills, violent crimes, drought, etc. Life has been difficult, boring and more than problematic to most women in urban and rural Nigeria. Aside from the appalling living conditions affecting the womenfolk, many are unemployed, lack social amenities and infrastructures in their homes/communities; experience several sociocultural problems in the hands of men; encounter human and reproductive rights abuses, trafficking, inequality, ignorance, infected with sexually transmitted diseases like herpes, gonorrhea and the deadly HIV-AIDS. Economic crisis was a major contributory reason for the near political and social breakdown of Nigeria. The net effect of the above analysis is a battered economy with high rates of population growth, low GNP, low capacity utilization and low productivity, a high unemployment rate and a situation in which Government, as the single most important employer, has been unable to pay workers a “living wage”. Women are the worst hit.
According to Nightingale (n.d.), statistics reveal that the highest percentage of unemployed females is within the age group 20–24 years, closely followed by 15–19 years olds. These age groups are most vulnerable to the lure of migration, especially trafficking. Furthermore, several Nigerian women experience maternal/infant mortality, ignorance, illiteracy, kidnapping, rape, female genital mutilation, gender disparity and discrimination, etc. All these problems have slowed the development and progress of the teeming women population across the 36 states of Nigeria.

It is not surprising, therefore, to read, hear, see or learn about many Nigerian women joining the menfolk to scamper to America or other countries in search of better life and their survival. On a daily basis, many young Nigerian girls and women leave the shores of Nigeria to America, and such migrations have its impact on the life and development of Nigeria. Some of these women are ignorant and illiterate; many do not have any direction in life or survival skills as they travel to America; thus, making life in a such a strange land more difficult, hence, lured into all kinds of vices – drug trafficking, shoplifting, advance fee fraud or 419 scams and human trafficking for prostitution, by some unscrupulous Nigerians and Americans. According to Nightingale (n.d.), human trafficking for prostitution, a more recent phenomenon in Nigeria, has exploded in the last decade. It is not known how many young girls and women are trafficked every year from Nigeria, partly due to the clandestine nature of the operation.

Lim (n.d.) succinctly stressed that changing labour markets with globalization have increased both opportunities and pressures for women to migrate. The migration process
and employment in a country of which they are not nationals can enhance women’s earning opportunities, autonomy and empowerment, and thereby change gender roles and responsibilities and contribute to gender equality. Lim argued that they also expose women to serious violation of their human rights.

Whether in the recruitment stage, the journey or living and working in another country, women migrant workers, especially those in irregular situations, are vulnerable to harassment, intimidation or threats to themselves and their families, economic and sexual exploitation, racial discrimination and xenophobia, poor working conditions, increased health risks and other forms of abuse, including trafficking into forced labour, debt bondage, involuntary servitude and situations of captivity.

However, there are some migrant women who have attained good trainings and education in Nigeria which enabled them to travel to America for further studies, for marriage or to seek employment and contribute meaningfully to their personal growth and development of America.

The problems caused by Nigerians’ frequent migration to America by Nigerians, especially the women are enormous. Many of these women fall victims to the harsh weather and living conditions, suffer exploitation by the American and Nigerian men, domestic abuse and violence, racism, United States government and police, scammers, murder, etc. Many are robbed and raped on a daily basis while some end up committing criminal acts like, drug trafficking, prostitution, drug abuse, child abuse, domestic violence, shoplifting, impersonation, credit card fraud, medical benefits and insurance scam, fighting, murder, etc., which does not only earn them arrests, deportation, jail terms but death
sentences, depending on the circumstances and grievousness of the offence. The situation tarnishes the image of Nigeria, and brings about diplomatic rows between Nigeria and the United States of America.

Nightingale (n.d.) opined that emigration has implications for national policy in, among other things, ensuring that the rights and interests of nationals are respected and protected while they are abroad. Intervention measures may, therefore, be needed to curb recruitment abuses and malpractices and to prevent exploitation. Concerned with the prevailing diaspora circumstances and problems, the Nigerian parliament introduced the Committee on Diaspora as one of the standing committees of the House of Representatives - established in 2009 under the former Speaker Dimeji Bankole in the 6th National Assembly in pursuant to Order XVII Section 144 of the House Standing orders. It is pertinent to note that there is no Senate Committee on Diaspora but the committee is the only parliamentary committee set up to handle Diaspora affairs in the whole of Africa (Diasporacommittee, 2010).

The House Committee on Diaspora Affairs was set up:

1. To promote the exchange of Ideas between home country and Nigerians in Diaspora.
2. To collect and maintain data on Nigerians in Diaspora from consulates, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Education, Justices, the Populations registers, Censuses, Employment agencies and statistics division of International Organizations and International Census Bureau for domestic planning and uses.
3. To initiate policies needed to recognize and harness the potentials of Nigerians in Diaspora networks and organizations, and assist in the realization of their agenda, and promote institutional changes to help public servants collaborate effectively with Diaspora representatives.

4. To participate in dialogues with Governments, regional, and local on Diaspora matters in their home and host countries. (Standing Orders of the House of Representatives xvii B 18 (1 & 2).

The extent to which the House Committee on Diaspora Affairs have worked to Nigerians in the diaspora and respective embassies to care for the migrants, protect their rights and rebuild the image of Nigeria abroad are yet to be determined. Notwithstanding, it is a move worth applauding which government intend to utilize effectively to relate with Nigerians in the diaspora. Of much concern to the author is mostly our children and women who are constantly in the news as either victims of rape, police abuse, arrest and deportation for illegal entry into a foreign country, theft, prostitution or victims of domestic abuse and battering by their spouses.

Educational Issues

Jones (2012) stressed that from an early age, we’ve been told that education is the key to one’s success in life. Study hard! Get good grades! Go to college! And by making education freely available to all children, we’re giving everyone an equal opportunity to succeed in
life. But the path to success and even middle-class existence is no longer so straightforward, if indeed it ever was.

Jones (2012) disclosed that at the OAS 2006 Conference, the well-known professor and visionary scholar Nicholas Negroponte stated,

“No matter what global problem you are dreading, whether it’s the elimination of poverty, whether it’s the creation of peace, whether its solving environmental energy problems, the solution- whatever it is- multiple solutions, the solutions always include education, never is it without an education component and sometimes cannot be done without education.” And he went on to state, “The children should be making things. The children should be writing computer programs. They should be learning by doing. The thing is not to learn excel or such programs, it is to learn to learn.”

The Nigerian woman is quite conscious of her education and development, whether formal, informal and non-formal education in the country or overseas. The average Nigerian woman works very hard in the homefront, farm, marketplace or school, depending on the opportunity she gets in life. In these aspects of educational endeavors, she engages in different skill training and learning – both in formal and non-formal educational programmes. For instance, after enrolling in school and obtained her common entrance into primary education, passing through Junior high school and senior high school programmes and obtained credits from her various examinations (NECO, WAEC, SSCE, JAMB, A’ levels, O levels, SAT, TOEFL, etc.), or gaining admission into the university,
graduates with honours; the woman settles down for a career, marriage and family life. Thus, another lifelong learning begins.

In all these efforts, there are discriminative practices against Nigerian women which include gender bias and profiling, cultural and economic marginalization, rape, domestic abuse and violence, denial of reproductive rights, etc.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and acceded to by 180 States, sets down rights for women, of freedom from discrimination and equality under the law (UNICEF, 2008). CEDAW has realized the rights and equality of woman is also the key to the survival and development of children and to building healthy families, communities and nations.

Nigerian Immigrants and the American Connection

Not every country in the world is on equal footing in terms of economic power and technological development. Many immigrants leave their countries in the hope of finding higher-paying jobs, better schools and safer homes than they had access to in their home country. These families are often motivated by providing their children with a better place to live and better career potential than what they could have found if they did not move (Bowerman, 2012). This has been the basis for many Nigerian immigrants especially women who migrate to the United States of America. But in the course of the sojourn in America, many things happen in the lives of these women – marital issues, child upbringing.
challenges, occupational hazards, professionalism, culture shock, racism and so on. Just a few will be discussed in this paper.

**Diaspora Marriage**

Marriages among Nigerians in the Diaspora have its challenges and have been of great concern to the custodians of Nigerian culture, especially women and men of the Igbo race. Several marriages among young Nigerians are crumbling each passing season in America due to the sacrosanct relationships that existed there. As Ejekam (2012) argued, there is resistance among Nigerians to accept the fact that they live in an American system that is more sympathetic to women and what is a norm in an African oriented/Nigerian family culture may be viewed as unconventional. Ejekam adds that the role of husbands in America is totally and mutually exclusive when it is compared to that in Nigerian context.

The reason for the marital issues and problems with Nigerian women could be attributed to many factors. While America has been so receptive to the influx of immigrants from every part of the world, the assimilation and transition challenges have been traumatic to these cultures, argues Ejekam (2012). The dramatic culture clash, values, norms and open society pose the biggest challenge to most foreigners who have been
assimilated and grounded in their ethnic culture in contrast to the host culture. It will sound illogical if the blame is solely attributed to the American culture; Nigerians, as the visitors have roles to play in order to bridge this disparity gap. Therefore, based on the slow pace of assimilation, the culture shock blossoms; leading to family cracks and sometimes, ending in divorce or worse, death.

Ihidero (2012) provided advice to soon-to-be-married Nigerian men, locally and in America; to “realise very early in life that you do not actually marry a Nigerian woman; a Nigerian woman marries you”. “She weighed her desires and you came closest to the mark. If she marries you for looks, it’s so her children may inherit good looks. If she marries you for money, it’s so the future can be reasonably guaranteed. If it is for your sexual prowess, it’s so she wouldn’t have to consider cheating often. In the end, it was her call, not yours”.

Ihidero (2012) further highlighted more advice and reasons for his views on the diaspora marriage to a Nigerian woman, thus:

1. You shall quickly learn after she has married you (just has soon as you realise that she married you and not the other way round) that you have to live where she desires.

2. To successfully marry a Nigerian woman, buy cable (DSTV’s) dual view package.

   If you fail to heed this warning, frustration will be a permanent feature of your life.

3. When you travel and return to your Nigerian wife, make sure you bring back ‘something’. No, something does not include jewellery, bottles of perfume,
clothing, chocolate and the likes. Those are tokens. ‘Something’ is the ability to have sex immediately upon your return, preferably as you walk into the front door from the airport. This is for two reasons: (A) You have been away for a long time and she has actually missed you. [It’s unimportant that you travelled for just 48hrs] (B) She needs to confirm, quickly, that whatever nefarious activities you were up to on your trip, you were responsible enough to leave ‘something’ in the reserve tank. Should you be incapable of delivering something upon request, you will merely confirm her suspicions that you were a bastard-child-of-an-unsuspecting-mother-maquerading-as-a-husband. She will say nothing, but her silence will be burdensome.

4. While on the sex issue, know this: There isn’t a SINGLE Nigerian woman who doesn’t know when her husband is cheating. It’s in every Nigerian woman’s DNA to know (Ihidero, 2012)

An online commentator lamented that divorce is threatening the Nigerian society in America, urging Nigerians to stand up as men and tackle it because if it continues at this rate, our grandchildren will be worse than Black Americans. Children are being exposed to divorce and all kinds of family instability on the account of selfish and stupid reasons. Nigeria should educate our women to understand the consequences of separations and divorces which is rampant in America. Ihidero (2012) concludes that Nigerian women are a rare species, and if you keep your ego in check, you may actually be happy with one. If you do succeed in doing that, don’t forget to thank your stars!
In Defense of Nigerian Women

This story about Durex, the condom company, releasing a survey that finds that Nigerian women are the most unfaithful in the world has been making rounds on several Nigerian blogs recently though this report was released last December. Lai Olurode, a professor of sociology at the University of Lagos described the research methodology to the Punch newspaper as being scientifically weak. According to Olurode, it is wrong to take a few samples from a population of about 73 million women and arrive at such general conclusion.

"Nigeria has a population of over 160 million and there are even more women in this population, that means we have over 70 million women. How can you now base your conclusions on that little sampling size? "Besides, the calibre of women used for the research is also important. Probably, the researchers used prostitutes as their sample, if that is done, that is a bias sample. You can't say Nigerian women are more promiscuous than their western counterparts. Even if you take your samples from the urban areas, it is still faulty. Nigerian women are some of the most hardworking women in the world and there were surveys that supported that in the past. It is also a known fact that Nigerian women are in large number in churches and mosques, all those things add up to something. We also have cultures that forbid adultery and promiscuity in our society, so the study should not be taken seriously."

Brain Drain

Brain drain is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria because her citizens have been involved in the dilemma for decades, leaving the shores of Nigeria for both employment and scholarly pursuits in the United States, and other nations. Alemika (2004) laments that the state of educational sector in Nigeria as affected by brain drain because of the poor
conditions of service which has necessitated brain drain from the university, not only to foreign universities but also to local institutions such as banks, corporations and government departments where they can make more money with better working conditions.

The recent US Bureau of Statistics, according to Otedo News (2012) revealed that Nigerians are the most educated immigrant community in the United States did not come to this author as a surprise. It is a fact many of us who have been blessed to have dealt with elements within the corporate and public sectors of the American society have known for a long time. The Otedo News report further argued that Nigerian immigrants have overtaken Asian immigrants—the Indians and Pakistanis who had previously occupied that spot as the most educated immigrant community in the United States. According to the report 37 percent of Nigerian immigrant population have bachelors degrees, 17 percent have graduate (masters) degrees while one percent, have post-graduate (PhD) degrees. The White American population on the other hand, has 19 percent with bachelor degrees, eight percent with graduate degrees while one percent has post graduate degrees. The cumulative effect of this revelation is that Nigerian Diaspora community brings a lot to the table and consequently has earned a pride of place within in certain sectors of the American socio-political experience (Otedo News, 2012). In all these academic strides, women form the bulk of the Nigerian educated professionals in the nursing profession in the USA.
Political Empowerment

Throughout much of the world, women’s equality is undermined by historical imbalances in decision-making power and access to resources, rights, and entitlements for women. Either by law or by custom, women in many countries still lack rights to:

- Own land and to inherit property
- Obtain access to credit
- Attend and stay in school
- Earn income and move up in their work, free from job discrimination

Moreover, women are still widely under-represented in decision-making at all levels, in the household and in the public sphere.

The Concept of Adult Education

The concept of adult education clearly connects with the application of women development and andragogical constructs to life which has become a global phenomenon in the field of literacy and community development. Adult education means essentially education for adults (Ugwoegbu, 2003), and the bulk of adult education curricular and programmes target women in various capacities who have missed out in early educational pursuits but ready and willing to engage in adult learning to attain set life goals. This gives credence to the idea of lifelong education – learning throughout life for individuals of all ages.
categories, including women. Adult education or adult learning does not occur in a vacuum; currently, research indicates that most adults engage in some form of learning in their daily lives and so there must be a set of critically reflective tools that one must use when appealing to the adult learner and the adult learning mind from a cognitive and intellectual framework (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Kasworm, Rose & Ross-Gordon, 2010; Stafford, 2010), as cited in Obiozor (2012).

According to Okediran and Sarumi (2001), adult education is virtually any activity for adults designed to bring about learning which may include the work of aerobics, instructor, nurse, private consultant, literacy worker and community activist. It is important to state here that the female adult learner has the advantage to learn from several professions and make a decision on which aspect of skill or vocation is suitable to her needs.

“Adult education is all kinds of learning undertaken by anyone who is an adult. Any man or woman who is learning anything new for acquiring information and understanding; or learning how to appreciate or not appreciating things or liking or disliking things new or manipulate anything with any part of the body is engaged in adult education” (Ani, 2003:22).

The essence of applying adult education in the development or training process of women is to make the learning experience possible, realistic, useful and successful to the female learners. Since the average woman strives hard for her personal and family growth – as a homemaker, wife, mother and caregiver; it is pertinent that her education is well structured (e.g. traditionally, when the woman as a young girl is prepared for domestic chores, marital responsibilities,
reproductive rights, child bearing and nursing/care, home economics and management, etc.) to reflect knowledge and skills that would facilitate the attainment of her life tasks and ambition. Those trainings are done for their livelihood and for the benefit of our society, because individuals are valued for their unique contributions and their ability to think creatively, take initiative and incorporate a global perspective into their decisions (Jones, 2012).

Using Adult Education for Empowerment of Nigerian Women in America

Over the years adult education has been used as a tool for improving the lot of people through capacity building (Kwapong, n.d.). An adult’s desire to participate in an educational programme often is the result of a changing personal, social, or vocational situation. This individual orientation, according to Kwapong, has resulted in the creation of a continually changing, dynamic field able to respond to the varied needs of society; including the adults desire to update her skills, obtain knowledge and information in the rapidly changing technical fields so as to remain effective and productive. This is what adult education is all about, because the adults engage in different non-formal education programmes to learn something new and update their knowledge and skills to meet their felt needs (Obiozor & Nwogbo, 2012).
Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 2003), pinpoints nine changes that must be changed in order to help Nigerian women and other women suffering from gender disparity.

It first states, there must be the same conditions for careers, vocational guidance, and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas. This equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training.

Second, is access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality. Third, is the elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education. This is encouraged by coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programs and the adaptation of teaching methods.

Fourth, the same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants. Similarly, fifth is the same opportunities of access to programs of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programs, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women.

Sixth, is the reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programs for girls and women who have left school prematurely.

Seventh concern listed is the same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education. Lastly, is access to specific educational information to help to ensure the
health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning (CEDAW, 2003).

Finally, the application of adult education principles and practices to the emancipation of women has been an ongoing process with little or no recognition from the citizens, globally. On a global level, aside from the efforts on championing women’s rights, equality, privileges and opportunities, the provision of world education programmes to the womenfolk is a great contribution coming from adult education circles.

A female scholar from Ghana, Olivia Tiwaah Frimpong Kwapong in her article, “Using Adult Education for Empowerment of Rural Women”, stressed that ‘World Education’ has a long history of successfully working with local partners to design, execute, manage and evaluate participatory, community-based initiatives to advance the conditions of girls and women. World Education's programs help girls enroll and stay in school and help women gain access to or create new educational, financial, and social resources in their communities. World Education programs help girls and women improve their own lives, the lives of their families and the conditions in their communities. For parents - and especially mothers - this means creating conditions that ensure their daughters have equal access to basic education, are able to make informed decisions about their futures, and are able to protect themselves from trafficking, sexual exploitation, HIV and AIDS, for example.

Furthermore, Kwapong’s submissions on world education targeted at the women opined that, by improving educational opportunities for girls and women, World Education helps women develop skills that allow them to make decisions and influence community
change in key areas. In turn, these programs have a positive impact on some of the most profound issues of our time: population growth, HIV and AIDS, peace and security, and the widening gap between the rich and poor.

Through adult education, the characteristics of the female learner, felt needs, motivation and readiness to learn are determined and provided by instructors. The instructional strategies are designed to address the literacy and felt needs of the woman at home, marketplace, office and community – rural or urban.

**Recommendations for reform**

Addressing women rights and inequities through laws and public policy is a way of formalizing the goal of gender equality and reducing illegal migrations of women to foreign lands. There should be effective policies and reforms in Nigeria to tackle the problems and challenges facing the women in all spheres of life, in order to halt the migration of intelligent, innovative, creative and skilled citizens. Nigeria needs her women in the country to support the men and contribute to her development. To empower the women in Nigeria, enhanced educational opportunities are considered expedient. Consequently, the provision of mass adult education programmes, social amenities and infrastructures, jobs and safe environment for the woman becomes significant to the development and sustenance of life in their communities.

Furthermore, Adeniran (2007) presented the following suggestions would be relevant in the process:
• The primary instrument to achieve socio-economic empowerment i.e. education mainstreaming should be used in a more effective and practical way so as to make real progress towards the attainment of the MDGs’ education for all’s goal by 2015 realizable
• The secondary instrument i.e. specific, targeted actions such as abolition of school fees, free school uniforms, free feeding etc. should be utilized as a compliment of mainstreaming strategies
• Imperialist male-gender privilege, biased traditional and religious myths impeding women’s education should be de-emphasised in Nigerian society
• An empowering educational approach, incorporating women as invaluable partners for social development should be encouraged;
• Skills, capabilities and achievements should henceforth take pre-eminence over obnoxious gender stereotypes in classifying and rewarding people in Nigeria.

The Nigerian Diaspora Commission must live up to its responsibility if fully operational. The Commission is charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating and to provide an organised system of collaborations of Nigerians in Diaspora for their contributions by identifying, preserving, and mobilising the human/capital/material resources and expertise to the general development of Nigeria.

The sociocultural organizations, professional groups with Nigerian background should intensify efforts to preservation and promotion of Nigeria’s cultural and traditional heritage (irrespective of tribes or ethnic affiliations) across the United States among the
Nigerian-American spouses, families, and children. The African/Nigerian culture is fast disappearing among the people in America because of the Hip Hop culture practiced there. Due to the sophistication and liberal nature of American culture, marriages are falling apart, morality, family values and traditions are of less significance in the American society. Civil societies, schools, churches, and conservative groups are not doing much to ameliorate the social issues facing women and their families.

Nigeria must engage its Diaspora population in its developmental efforts. If the Western world recognized the sterling contributions our nationals have made toward the growth of their societies, Nigerian government should find ways and means of appropriating the talents of these patriotic Nigerians and make them partners and integral components of our national development (Otedo News 2012). The full integration of women in this regards, becomes imperative.

Investigations show that many migrants are compelled to leave the country in search of better opportunities and a stable economic, social and political environment. It has also been established that trafficked women and girls are tricked into migrating. Action is needed for all categories of migrant workers, human trafficking and child labour and government to prosecute identified traffickers and compensate and rehabilitate victims of trafficking. Funds recovered from traffickers could be utilized to rehabilitate victims. Therefore, government should adopt a migrant policy that reflects the country’s realities. This framework is indispensable for both assessing the enormity of the problems and in seeking solutions to them, for the benefit of our women.
The Government should strengthen its embassies and missions abroad to perform their functions efficiently and provide them with special funds to respond to migrant workers’ needs in times of distress. Foreign missions should also help to gather information and data on migrant workers in their host countries.

Finally, education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women (UNFPA, 2012). This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. Investing in girls’ education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty. Investments in secondary school education for girls yield especially high dividends.

Girls who have been educated are likely to marry later and to have smaller and healthier families. Educated women can recognize the importance of health care and know how to seek it for themselves and their children. Education helps girls and women to know their rights and to gain confidence to claim them. However, women’s literacy rates are significantly lower than men’s in most developing countries (UNFPA, 2012). Literacy rates must be improved to get the best out of our women and development.

The author commends, UNFPA operating in many countries, UNFPA supports capacity-building for women’s NGOs and for government to use the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, because it provides a legally-binding basis for the realization of women’s rights – political, economic, social and cultural in the 179 countries which have ratified it (as of October, 2004).
References


Adeniran, A.I.(2007) "Educational inequalities and women’s disempowerment in Nigeria" Department of Sociology, University of Lagos, Nigeria.


Web Support

http://countrystudies.us/nigeria/20.htm
http://diasporacommittee.com/
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_education_in_Nigeria
http://www.jaguda.com/2009/06/05/nigeria-women-vs-african-american-women/
http://www.oberlinheritage.org/researchlearn/timeline.
http://www.right-to-education.org/node/187Importance of girls’/women’s education
http://www.UNFPA.org/gender/empowerment3.htm
http://www.worlded.org/WEIInternet/projects/ListProjects.cfm?Select=Topic&ID=16&ShowProjects=No&gclid=CIa0vajC2LMCFYXLtAodPEUAVQ

Paper on “Women, Education and the Diaspora: Using Adult Education for Empowerment of Nigerian Women in America” by Dr. Williams Emeka Obiozor