

Use of data in the effective monitoring of gender equality and empowerment policies

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Abstract

Lack of effective monitoring is believed to be a major cause of many policy failures. This partly accounts for the public concern about availability of data for monitoring of gender equality and empowerment policies following the adoption of Beijing Platform for Action on 15 September 1995 by 189 signatory states.

Monitoring of effectiveness of gender policies has assumed greater importance as governments now spend more on gender issues arising from the globalisation of gender equality and empowerment. More women are also becoming aware of their rights and there is greater demand for accountability and transparency among the citizens.

There is a direct relationship between effective monitoring and result oriented policy implementation. In the case of gender policy, it is the relevant Policy document (and the ensuing gender strategies) that provide a basis for better assessment of their implementation. In accordance with the Paris Declaration, on Aid effectiveness, every policy should be verifiable by means of results-based indicators. These indicators are a component of the programming and are based on gender-specific data used for monitoring. Preference is given to participative methods of assessment with data that is as gender sensitive as possible.

The Nigerian situation is illustrative of how data has been useful in the effective monitoring of gender equality and empowerment policies. Various kinds of data have been relevant in providing considerable insight into the status of women and men in Nigeria to a wide range of stakeholders. The published gender data showing baselines and trend have helped to shape Government reaction to issues of gender policy positively. A particular success story is in the area of representation in leadership, particularly political participation where more women are now occupying ministerial and top level positions including Judicial and military posts hitherto reserved for men. Some of the compelling data are found in published reports by data producers and users such as National Bureau of Statistics, National Population Commission, British Council, and Federal Ministry of Education.

While there have been successes, there are also challenges that constrain the availability of quality gender sensitive data. Major challenges include poor responses to questions, data user/producer capacity problems, inadequate funding and consequent limited scope, inadequate synergy between data producing agencies and institutions and lack of access to some segments of the women population due to cultural factors.

The way out is to pay more attention to Gender based budgeting, greater sensitisation of the populace and stakeholders on the use of data for policy monitoring as well as proactive enlightenment programmes to mitigate the issue of user capacity. There is also need for more common platforms to promote synergy among data producers as a means of improving coordination and collaboration in the production of gender sensitive data for effective monitoring of gender equality and empowerment policies.