



Mass Media, Promotion of Gender Equality and the Effect on Women's Contribution to National Development

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Abstract

The mass media have the power to influence radical social changes as agents of social engineering, with the capacity to slow down or engender progress. This study, investigated the powers of the media to promote gender equality or otherwise and the effect on their role innational development. It applied descriptive analysis using secondary data or library method to analyse materials that relate to the potentials, strengths and efficacies of the media to influence and promote gender equality or otherwise and the overall effect on women's contribution to national development. Marxist's Doctrine of Hegemony was the theory used to strenghtenthe study, with some specific objectives. The study revealed that the media under-represent, misrepresent and stereotype women, thereby perpetuating the prejudice and gender inequality they already face, thereby slowingdown the process of improving gender equality and women's growth and empowerment. The study, thus, recommends that female political officeholders should be encouraged to step up efforts to ensure that gender equality related bills are passed into laws; more women are appointed into relevant political and management positions at all levels, including media establishments, while women should not undermine themselves by accepting commercial and other roles that cast them as objects.

Key Words: Gender equality, Gender inequality, Gender promotion, Mass media, National development

Introduction

About half of Nigeria's population is made up of women, (NPO, 2006). These women play significant roles in society's reproductive, economic and productive spheres, while unfortunately at the same time being apparently relegated to the background in all of life. Their participation in society's formal and informal systems, notably in decision making such as being in management and political positions, has largely remained insignificant (Makama, 2010; Yusuf &Yusufu, 2011). According to them, Nigerian society is deeply rooted in gender-based discrimination and downgrading, resulting in extremely compromised gender inequality and low position for women, as they face oppression, ostracism, dehumanization and even traded on, due to their gender. For long, the instruments of gender discrimination seemed to have been the mass media. However, this rights violation seems to have been intensified by the new media. By consistently under-representing, misrepresenting and stereotyping women, the new media have reinforced gender discrimination and inequality through its educational, informational representation of women and their socializing functions. This phenomenon has slowed the progress of gender equality and empowerment. According to statistics, Nigeria is ranked 118th out of 134 countries for gender equality (GNR, 2012). As a result, there is still much that can be done to better the situation of women in Nigeria. This is especially true when it comes to upholding international laws that protect and advance gender equality. Achievement of sustainable national development is a requirement for gender equality, which is essential for development. Studies have shown that countries with high gender development indices perform better in terms of overall development and the opposite is also true (Okonofua, 2016).

The media are in position toplay prominent role in the promotion of gender equality in society, setting the agenda for public discussion and socializing the masses on the relevant impacts of gender issues. They disseminate and cover current events, provide frameworks for interpretation, mobilize citizens with regard to variety of issues, reproduce dominant culture and society and entertain (Llanos & Nana, 2011). As such, the mass media are important in the promotion of gender equality, both with the predominant working environment in terms of employment and promotion of female staff at all levels and the presentation of women and men in terms of fair gender portrayal and the use of neutral and non-gender specific language.

The new media, also called digital media technologies are used by both genders in the transmission of news and promoting cultural values, norms, ethnocentrism and beliefs of the end users of several platforms such asFacebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc, through the help of internet connected

devices. New media technologies include blogs, websites, videos and internet apps. Studies have found that although the number of women working in the media has been increasing globally, the top management positions are still very male-dominated (Aliede, Ogo & Alegu, 2023; White, 2009). This disparity is particularly evident in Africa where cultural impediments to women fulfilling the roles as journalists remain an illusion (e.g. travelling away from home, evening work and covering issues such as politics and sports which are considered to fall within the masculine domain) (Myers, 2009). The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMNP) reports that throughout the world, female journalists are more likely to be assigned 'soft' subjects such as family, lifestyle, fashion and the arts. Women are less likely to write or cover hard news, politics and the economy. Ascertaining the extent the media ameliorate or exacerbate this ugly situation is the primary objective of this study which adopted the tool of descriptive analysis.

Statement of the Problem

For many years women have been subjected to all sorts of oppression among them inaccurate media portrayals. Regarding the volume and calibre of information that is reported about them in the media, they have been sidelined except for negative reportage and misrepresentation. These persist despite the significant and vital contributions women have made in variety of fields. The media still fail to give women their due recognition. Reports regarding women have no historical, social or scientific basis. When women are portrayed negatively, particularly in criminal activities and other vices, they are featured on the front page of the news. Women are still viewed as being weak, illogical, meek and inferior despite having demonstrated mental talents and capacity in classrooms. As such, they cannot be trusted with certain positions of responsibility since they are not qualified for certain occupations. Because men continue to make up the bulk of media professionals, the dehumanization of women in the mass media through sensationalism and unfavourable portrayal endures. Many governmental, non-governmental organizations and individuals, including UNESCO, NGO's and writers, including British author Mary Wollstonecraft; French philosopher Marquis de Condorcet, and Nigerian philosopher Ogunjide-Leslie Molar, have advocated for the right of women to vote and to hold positions of power. The issue stems from how society and the media have misrepresented the inequality of women. This study attempted to assess the depth of the problem and perhaps, proffer some solution that would lead to women given their due respects, recognition, positions and acknowledged as essential members of society.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study:

1. To determine whether discrimination and exclusion against Nigerian women is real.
2. To examine the place of the mass media in such discriminatory practices against women.
3. To ascertain the degree to which women are negatively portrayed in the mass media and its effect on women's contribution to national development.
4. To identify measures to be taken to reduce discrimination against women.

Theoretical Framework

Doctrine of Hegemony

Marxist hegemony was applied to give the study some background. According to the theory, a dominant ruling class exercises cultural and social leadership or authority by influencing the lower classes in the political, economic and cultural arenas. This is done in order to impose their own worldview and make it the accepted standard of the day. As a result, the ruling class in society controls the media and employs them as tools to assert its dominance over the rest of society. In other words, the beliefs of the governing class become accepted as truth. According to this argument, the media do not accurately portray how women's roles are changing in society as men dominate the top news outlets and produce the vast bulk of the news. As a result, they make news-making decisions. The media frequently ignore women. Females are significantly less likely than men to take part of or be highlighted in news stories as public figures, business executives or news makers. They are even less likely to be interviewed as subject matter experts. By so doing women's equality with men are continuously undermined.

The Concepts of Gender Equality and Gender Inequality

Every aspect of women's everyday life is significantly impacted by gender equality or lack thereof. Gender equality is described as "women and men having equal conditions for achieving their full human rights and for contributing to and benefiting from economic, social, cultural and political growth" by the International Labour Organization in 2000. While some nations have made significant strides toward achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, Nigeria has lagged behind. This is despite having ratified majority of international agreements that protect and advance these rights. By failing to implement these agreements, Nigeria has slowed the progress of women's empowerment and equality, situation that is worsened by the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian, which is a significant contributor to gender disparity in the country. Patriarchy dominates most traditional societies. It is described as "the hierarchical system of social organization in which cultural, political and economic structures are controlled by men" (Kendall, et al, 2007 as cited by Makama, 2013). It is "a system of social stratification and discrimination on the basis of sex, which confers material benefits on males while concurrently imposing significant restrictions on the position and activities of females", according to Aina (1998) cited by Makama, 2013). Males dominate women because they are viewed as superior and inferior, respectively. The dominance of men and the oppression of women have been ingrained into the structure of social institutions and organizations at all levels of leadership for generations thanks to patriarchy, which is profoundly ingrained in our cultural/traditional system and religion (Makama, 2013; Okoroafor & Iherohanma, 2014; Yusuf, et al, 2014). As efforts in 2016 to adopt a gender equality law failed, these two elements continue to be major roadblocks. Tradition has a definite definition of the roles

of men and women: males are the providers and the leaders, while women are limited to domestic work as homemakers and caregivers. By tacitly accepting domestic and sexual abuse, authorizing differential pay for equal or comparable work and tolerating gender-differential terms in inheritance rights and legal adulthood, patriarchy creates the parameters for the inherently unequal relationship between men and women (Salaam, 2003). A strict socialization process results in the institutionalization of a patriarchal culture. According to Wamue-Nagare, et al., this promotes family and community harmony by ensuring that each member of society is aware of the obligations, roles and responsibilities that are expected of them (Wamue-Nagare, et al., 2013 and Igbelina-Igbokwe, 2011). Besides subjecting and predisposing Nigerian women to various forms of discrimination based on gender, patriarchy also justifies such practices (Makama, 2013; Yusuf, et al., 2014; Akpotor, 2016).

Gender discrimination is defined in Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex with the effect or purpose of impeding or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of man and woman, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural and religious fields" (1979).

Women continue to be disproportionately represented among the poorest citizens of the nation as a result of gender inequality. They have unequal access to or are unable to access economic resources, opportunities and political influence. Rural women make up 76% of the whole rural population, making up a significant share of the poor. They generally work in agriculture and small-scale trading and are largely illiterate. Although producing 70% of the country's food supply, they only have access to 15% of the agricultural sector's resources (WIN 2005 as cited by Yusuf, et al 2014). There is pay gap between the sexes in paid employment, with fewer women having access to formal employment and many earning less than males in the same positions. Women are drastically underrepresented in the legislative branch of politics. Olurode (2011) and Ekpe, Aloba & John (2014) verified that Nigeria had one of the worst representations in Africa, with 5.9% on the index of women's political participation, trailing Uganda (34.6%), South Africa (43.2%), Ethiopia (27.7%), Cameroun (20%), Niger (12.3%), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (8.0%). This implies that, as has already been demonstrated, it would be difficult to pass legislation that would exacerbate the situation of women. Girls and women also have restricted access to education, with many in the core north forgoing their education in favour of getting hitched. They frequently do not receive equitable treatment in inheritance and have limited access to land, property, and assets ownership. In the same vein, women are subject of discrimination under the Nigerian legal system in numerous ways because of the prevalence of laws that encourage violence against women based on their gender. Among them are such laws like the Criminal Code's Sections 350 and 363, which deal with unlawful and indecent assault, but call for a milder penalty when the victim is a female. In addition, women experience gender-based violence, which can take many different forms, including physical and mental abuse, rape, human trafficking, female genital mutilation, early marriage, flagrant violations of their other fundamental human rights, an endless list.

Women's Representation in the Media

There is no doubt that the media have assumed an enormous role in today's globalized world. The media have immense power to influence, control and bring about innovative changes. Not only do they inform people about everyday happenings, facilitate the transfer of information, entertain, mobilize and set agenda for citizens on various issues, reproduce predominant culture and society, the media actively construct reality, presenting particular versions of reality through the images and information they provide, thus engendering a framework through which people can interpret the social world. Van Dijk (2000, p. 33) posits that the media are the "main source of people's knowledge, attitudes and ideology". Okunna (2005) states that men and women in every community have enough distinctions in their "distinct behaviour patterns" to qualify them to belong to two different cultures or subcultures, in her succinct comment on gender and communication. In their definition of subculture, Porter & Samovar (1991) note that it is as "a racial, ethnic, regional, economic or social community exhibiting specific patterns of behaviour sufficient to identify it from others within an embracing culture or society." It is also observed that as men's dominance and women's subjugation are so prevalent, their subcultures are "actually separated by a world of difference" and men and women belong to two different social groupings or categories. Porter & Samovar's (1991) further define subcultures as "a racial, ethnic, regional, economic, or social community exhibiting specific patterns of behaviour sufficient to identify it from other within an embracing culture or society." While women's subjugation and men's dominance are so prevalent that their subcultures are "actually separated by a world of difference," noting that men and women belong to two such social groupings or categories. Women's representation in the media has always generated controversy. Wood (2007) presents three ideas for characterizing how the media portray gender. The first is the under-representation of women. The second is portrayals of the relationship between men and women that place emphasis on traditional roles and normalize violence against women. In the third, both men and women are portrayed in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially accepted views of gender. Yet in all, discriminatory disposition against women in media management and operations is apparently entrenched as seen in most media management policies, precedents, organization and structure and is almost an established case (Aliede, Ogodo & Alegu, 2023).

Female Under-Representation in the Scheme of Things

By often misrepresenting the true ratio of men to women in the population, the mass media under-represent women and this amounts to the distortion of reality. This emphasizes men as the cultural norm and generates the notion that there are more men than women in the community (Wood, 1994). The media frequently ignore women. Females are far less likely than men to take part in or be highlighted in news stories as public figures, business executives or news makers. They are even less likely to be interviewed as subject matter experts. Certain groups of women, such as those who are poor, old, from the working class, members of racial or religious minorities or who have a different sexual orientation, are much less able to be represented. Males predominate in the upper echelons of the media and produce the vast bulk of the news. As a result, they make news-related decisions (Wood, 2007; Morna, 2002; Babatunde, et al, 2013; Kangas, Huma, Fraser & Browne, 2015), which very often misrepresent women's true situation. Men generate an overwhelming majority of the news in Nigeria, for instance, according to a survey done by the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)

in 2000 to assess the level of women's participation in media globally, as 95% of journalists covering news in the nation's radio and television stations, as well as newspapers were men. The percentage of women who were covered in the news was very low (17%).

Women appear as news subjects 17% of the time in significant topic areas including politics and government. In addition, they appear 3% of the time in business and the economy and 7% of the time overall. 13% of the time they are quoted in newspapers and 20% of the time they are in pictures (GMMF, 2000 as cited by Amobi, 2013).

There are similarities between the proportion of women in the media and the dearth of female executives in the industry. This has implications for media content since female media professionals are more likely than their male counterparts to cover women's issues more thoroughly. This is because they reflect on their needs and perspectives and present them in a more favorable way, according to Wood (1994) and Kangas, et al (2015).

Okunna (2005) observes that Nigerian women were still difficult to distinguish in the Nigerian news media, citing a study done in 2002 by Okonkwo & Okunna (2002) on four Nigerian news magazines (four issues of each magazine published in January and February 2002) and five newspapers (ten daily issues of each newspaper released in May 2002). The research showed that 92 (91%) of the 101 reporters whose by-lines were found in the 42 news magazine items were men and only 9% were women. In terms of news subjects, males made up 86% of those in the news magazines, while females made up only 14%. Only 93 (16%) of the articles in the magazine were published. Out of the 566 news pieces that were analyzed, just 53 of them had women as their main subject. Women were not given significance in being cited or captured in images, in addition to their low frequency of appearance. Only 10%, or 6, of the 61 photos that were used to create the news magazine covers and only 30% or 11 shots of the 263 photos that accompanied the complete news item were of women. As with the newspapers, the situation was similar. Women's lack of representation in the media denies or restricts their ability to speak out in the society. Amobi (2013) contends that by ignoring them, the media presents them as inert objects without opinions. The visibility of women is affected by biases and unfavourable stereotypes, (Okaya, 2005) and Amobi, (2013). While reporting on "women's issues," the media frequently trivialize them by concentrating on domestic matters and mostly disregarding other categories of issues like politics, economics and sport. It is quite possible that violence against women may not be reported as it is thought to belong in the private sphere. When it is publicized, it is done such in a sensational style that always assigns the victim culpability (Morna, 2002).

Male and Female Stereotypes in Representation and Portrayal

Both men and women are stereotypically portrayed in the mass media in ways that are congruent with prevailing cultural ideas about gender. The typical image of men is that they are strong, bold, dominant, active, assertive, daring, sexually aggressive, independent, fearless, violent, completely in control of their emotions and "mostly uninvolved in human relationships". On the other hand, women are generally represented as sexual objects that are submissive, dependent on men and frequently stupid and incompetent. They are only portrayed as housewives and caregivers for the household and individuals (Wood, 2007, Kangas, et al, 2015). There is no room in these representations for alternate interpretations of masculinity or femininity. People who carry out duties, exhibit qualities, or behave in a way that is not consistent with their gender are frequently denigrated in the media (Kangas, et al, 2015). Allegedly, the Nigerian media portray women inaccurately. According to Amobi (2013), there are more unfavourable and unrealistic depictions of women than there are of them in reality. The predominant film industry in Nigeria, Nollywood, is the place where unfavourable stereotypes about Nigerian women are most overt. Even if they have made some progress in this field, women are still portrayed in these films in ways that perpetuate the gender gap. Women are frequently portrayed as sex objects, rebellious, immoral, weak vessels, unduly submissive to men, the root of family problems, more suitable for domestic work than professional or career responsibilities, sluggish, and reliant on men (Okunna, 2005; Amobi, 2013).

In Chika (2012), cited by Endong & Obonganwan (2015), the phrase "the old and wrinkled woman becomes the image of a wizard, the attractive lady becomes the prostitute and the loving and caring wife becomes the foolish and ignorant". These are instances of some of the negative stereotypes used in depicting women. Women portray the roles of secretaries, nurses, instructors and domestic helpers to show how subservient they are to their male counterparts. They are not frequently shown as professionals and business leaders. In this vein, Endong & Obonganwan (2015) are of the claim that these negative portrayals/representations not only depersonalize women and reinforce traditional prejudices, but also reinforce the stereotyping of women in society. Amobi (2013) and Okunna (2005) concur with this claim and point out that it also has a "cultivation effect" on young girls. Okunna (2012) further reveals that the representation of women and their roles was primarily cast negatively in a focal group research on the portrayal of women in various Igbo films. Secondly, the audience's perspective of and behaviour toward women were negatively impacted by the negative portrayal of women, notwithstanding their belief that it was unrealistic. Wood (2007) cautions that because the media permeate our lives, the ways in which they portray genders may skew our perceptions of what is appropriate and desirable for both men and women, as well as how we see ourselves.

Stereotypical Images of the Relationship Between Man and Woman

Beyond the traditional picture of men and women, the media also accurately represent the bond that exists between them. According to Wood (2007), there are four themes that the media uses to promote and reflect the conventional roles of the sexes:

1. They consist of: male dominance/female servile pattern/role penetrates mediated representations of relationships because women are perceived as dependent on men for their identity.
2. Men's authority and women's incompetence: men are portrayed in the media as competent authorities who save women from their own incompetence. Women are portrayed in the media as being helpless and dependent on men. Additionally, even when women are the intended market for the items, employing a male voice over in commercials reinforces the societal idea that men are the authorities. This is because women depend on them to tell them what to do.
3. Men as primary breadwinners and women as primary caregivers: Men are depicted in the media as being the breadwinners and women as homemakers. Even when they are depicted positively, women who work outside the home, their occupations receive scant or no attention. They are primarily portrayed as wives, mothers, and housewives. This is especially true with advertisements, according to Okunna (2005),

who claims that most of them still feature women in traditional roles that feed into gender stereotypes. Taking note of the fact that in research of 5 newspapers, 33 (35%) of the 93 advertisements that featured images of women presented them in home settings, while 31 (33%) just used a woman's image as a decorative background. The media promote men's roles outside the home and women's roles at home.

4. Men as aggressors versus women as victims and sexual objects: Women are portrayed in the media as objects of male desire. Women's victimization is a result of the feminine traits they are urged to cultivate in order to conform to conventional definitions of femininity. Likewise men are expected to demonstrate aggressiveness, dominance, sexuality and strength, attributes that have been connected to the abuse of women.

Another way to depict women is as decorative items that need to catch men's attention in order to be respected. In music videos, where barely dressed women attempt to get men's attention, we see the most obvious instances of women becoming sexual objects and men acting as aggressors. Women are not characterized by their abilities but more by their bodies (outward looks) and how men treat them (Wood, 2007; Morna, 2002).

Gender Equality, Media Representation and National Development

There is no denying the fact that the unfavourable media portrayal of women in Nigeria has contributed to the perpetuation of social and cultural biases against them. This has aided the gender inequality they face. Because women are mainly ignored by the media, their roles and accomplishments have been unpublicized and unrecognized for a very long time. According to Ukozor (2004) and Amobi (2013), a closer examination of media's coverage of gender issues in Nigeria reveals a shameful image of women's exclusion or marginalization. Rather than providing a balanced account of issues from the perspectives of women and men, the media either ignore the voices of women or portray them as impersonal objects without opinions. As well, restriction on women's level of participation, particularly in decision-making, has negative impact on their participation in public life and growth. Babatunde (2013, p. 26) concurs and claims that the "politics of exclusion" and the predominance of men in the media industry "take away the power of women and girls", "Removes the much-needed female voice of reason that would have helped eradicate gender bias and reliance on males as subject-matter experts on matters affecting women and contributed to growth and sustainable development."

Johannessen (2006) also looked at how Tanzanian women were portrayed in the news and media in her doctoral thesis, "Gender, Media and Development: The Role of the Media in the Cultural Struggle of Gender Transformation in Tanzania", noting that while they were seen as an economic force, they were also portrayed negatively as the cause of moral decay and held responsible for "everything" that is wrong in society. She felt that this diminished women's capacity to participate actively in society and development. an additional area of focus is how gender inequity is reinforced by the derogatory media portrayals of women, which prevent them from actively promoting sustainable development. Negative psychological effects result from discrimination, which lowers women's morale and their motivation to advance society (Graham, 2017 as cited by Ajayi&Omosulel, 2017).

Invisibility of women in the media mirrors their lack of visibility in society (Amobi, 2013). As Johannessen (2006) notes, gender transition and sustainable development work hand in hand. Thus, women should be represented in the political system, civil society, economics, and other sectors that are crucial to development. They, therefore, need to be effectively and positively depicted by the media, especially in fields like management and politics, to achieve exposure and voice. Sustainable development cannot be attained without gender equality. The high rates of female poverty, particularly in rural regions, have been related to the under-representation of women at all levels of government and decision-making arena. This has led to growing gender inequities and in turn to the feminization of poverty. In addition to being a development strategy for reducing poverty, gender equality and empowerment also ensure that women are fairly represented, as well as guaranteeing that women participate in the economic, social, political and environmental spheres, Reeves,et al, (2000).

The Media's Contribution to the Promotion of Gender Equality (and Sustainable Development) One of the twelve essential areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action focuses on the media since they play crucial role in furthering gender equality. Yet, as we have seen, the media often contribute to the issue because of the way they portray women, which perpetuates gender stereotypes. The Beijing Platform for Action urged more engagement and access for women to the media, new communication technologies and decision-making, as well as the promotion of a fair and non-stereotypical representation of men and women in the media. Although there has been some gains in women's media participation, according to the GMMP, however, as the research demonstrates, there is still much to be done to improve women's representation and access. It is extremely difficult to change people's mindsets since they have been socialized for generations and have had customs, society and religion to support them (Morna, 2002). The public can be made aware of gender equality and educated about it through the media. Also, it can encourage gender equity and healthy connections between all genders, while also empowering people to question gender conventions (Yingqun, 2017; Joof, 2013). The media can significantly alter how society views women by portraying them positively and more frequently in roles that deviate from the norm. The media have the power as agents of social engineering, to advance gender equality through their agenda-setting role. Casserly (2016) concurs that the media could be of positive roles, pointing out that the media may make "gender" a top priority for everyone by elevating gender-related topics from the private to the political agenda and treating them all as such. To increase media coverage of gender issues, a number of strategies could be applied. To achieve gender balance in the media and in their editorial content, women journalists should be empowered, while alternative media platforms should be developed to provide women's perspectives, among others, (Morna, 2002).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The media which frequently misrepresented, underrepresented, and stereotyped women have contributed to the deep-seated gender prejudice already existing in several cultures as is the case in Nigerian. The media are potent instruments for portrayal of women as irrelevant, while they can also make them relevant, if they wish. Majority of the media merely create pages or programmes for women's issues, continually trivializing women's issues and the perception that society has of women. The result has been ineffective attempts to engage the media in promoting gender issues. All these have potentially affected the active involvement and thus, helpful in asserting the extent of women participation in sustainable development.

Both the reviewed literature and applied theoretical framework justify the objectives of the study as they clearly proved the prevalence of the negative role of the mass media through discriminatory reportorial practices and misrepresentation in hindering gender equality in the country (as elsewhere and the resultant effect on women's contribution to national development.

In the light of these findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. Political officeholders who are women should be encouraged to step up their efforts to ensure that gender equality bills are passed into laws.
2. More women should be appointed to political positions at all levels of government, as this would increase their representation and voices on local and international development issues.
3. In order to reduce the negative misrepresentation of women, women should be encouraged to work in the media as newsmakers, presenters and media managers.
4. Women should be encouraged to decline commercial and roles that cast them as objects instead of subjects. Instead, they should aspire to roles that uphold and do not diminish their femininity. There should be review of laws that do not fully protect the general wellbeing of women.
5. Women's empowerment programmes, especially educational ones, should be targeted at rural women to enable them be more aware of their rights, civic responsibilities, capabilities and opportunities.

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