

ASSESSING CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ON GENDER ROLES IN ANGWAN-TONI COMMUNITY THROUGH A THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of climate change on gender roles within Angwan-Toni, a rural community in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. It emphasises the potent role of Theatre for Development (TfD) as a participatory tool for raising awareness and prompting behavioral change in the wake of climate adversities. Generally, climate change and gender discourses are organized concepts whose discussions are more or less undertaken in boardrooms, seminars and other such functions and events. This formality leaves community dwellers in sheer ignorance of climate crisis, even as they suffer the effects, and inadvertently try to manage their livelihood in its wake. Climate change is a global threat, as such require adequate awareness at all levels, both at the rural and urban communities. The study utilizes participatory communication and place-based education theories, and adopted a mixed methods approach, by incorporating Focus Group Discussions, Interviews, Questionnaires, and field observation. Findings reveal that women bear the brunt of climate change through increased responsibilities such as water sourcing and fuel gathering. The study underscores TfD's potential in fostering environmental consciousness and addressing gender-specific climate vulnerabilities.

Keywords: Climate Change, Gender Roles, Theatre for Development, Participatory Communication, Rural Community

Introduction

Climate change is an emerging global challenge with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations, particularly in developing nations. In rural Nigeria, its implications on gender dynamics remain underexplored. It phenomenon has had far reaching effects on several vistas of human existence; be it health, agriculture, economy, education, travel, social relationships etc. According to Paul Watkiss et al (1), “the effects of global climate change from greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) are diverse and potentially very large, and probably constitute the most serious long-term environmental issue currently facing the world.” In this guise, climate change is redefining the various human institutions, consistent with the effects on the eco-structural formations. Inclusive in this changing dynamic is the functionality of gender roles in the wake of climate adversity. Most interesting, is the fact that climate change and gender roles are global concerns and are both embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unfortunately, awareness on it impact and how it affects gender relations is thin and largely limited, especially as it concerns rural dwellers who also suffer the brunt and likewise contribute to its occurrence, but continue to live in ignorance for lack of adequate information to manage their existence and to control causative factors at the primary level. Further, their inability to understand its impact poses greater harm on

social relations including, gender labour roles. The study therefore, examines the correlation between climate change impact on interpersonal relationship by highlighting gender roles, vulnerabilities and how environmental changes affect gender-specific roles in Angwan-Toni, community, and advocates for the use of Theatre for Development (TfD) as a medium for community education and engagement.

Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical lenses underpin this study:

- **Participatory Communication Theory:** Stresses the importance of community dialogue and stakeholder engagement in development processes.
- **Place-Based Education Theory:** Highlights experiential learning rooted in local environmental contexts, fostering a sense of responsibility and action.

These frameworks inform the study's participatory methodology and its use of TfD as a grassroots communication tool.

Methodology

A **mixed methods** approach was employed. Primary data were gathered via:

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**
- **Semi-Structured and Structured Interviews (SSIs and SIs)**
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**
- **Questionnaires**

Secondary data were derived from literature reviews and community theatre reports. The study site, Angwan-Toni, is an agrarian community of about 50,000 residents, characterized by diverse ethnic groups and limited access to formal education and infrastructure.

The Functionality of Theatre for Development as a tool for Social Advocacy

Theatre for Development has been a functional theatre machinery for practical educational advocacy over the years. Its mode of operation being people-oriented has enabled its efficacy in almost all community-based problems. As a mode of social education, its functionality has been based on correctional advocacy, informative campaigns, and attitudinal sensitization modus. According to Ime Usen (5), "Theatre for Development is a broad concept in the study and practice of theatre. It is a practice of the theatre which encompasses broad spectra of methodologies towards solving problems in the society in a practical, participatory approach." In this case, such methodologies seek to include the people for whom the developmental projects are intended, and who stand to gain directly as beneficiaries of such venture... This is moreso because, TfD is largely an independent people-oriented, problem-solving approach devised in the theatre to approach developmental, information-orientation and community-based projects, especially those that bother on rehabilitation, information dissemination, attitude change and social re-establishment (Usen, 5).

In order to further conceptualise the sub-genre of Theatre for Development, Luper Sokpo (95) quoting Pridmore and Rifkin (10), observes that, "information is power, people who lack information lack power and lack choices about how to improve their lives or control what happens to them." Sokpo (95) further posits that, "the need to provide people with quality information so as to make informed choices, as well as improve their quality of life has been the thrust of Popular Theatre practice (also referred to as Community Theatre and/or Theatre for Development)."

Generally, the idea of taking theatre to the people has been tagged variously as 'Radical Theatre,' 'Popular Theatre,' 'Guerrilla Theatre,' 'Theatre of the Oppressed,' 'Pedagogical Theatre,' 'Community Theatre,' and/or 'Street Theatre.' In recent times, another nomenclature has emerged known as the Theatre for Development (TfD). The introduction of this new nomenclature however, serves as an umbrella name for any kind of theatre enterprise that has an engagement with the people, with the aim of fashioning practical strategic options to deal with challenges that affect them. TfD therefore, is a dynamic strategy that is adopted to deal with cross cutting issues, issues that do not concern theatre activists alone but also involve other disciplines as well (Sokpo 95).

As aforementioned, Theatre for Development is a multi-dimensional aspect of theatre that is variously engaging and participatory in nature, which enables and brings about people-oriented and community-based development. It is a participatory theatre practice which allows communities to write their own stories and engage in a drama-based experience on the messages that emerge from the situations and challenges bothering their immediate community. In the same vein with Sokpo's (95) view above, Asen Marcellinus (1), also perceives Theatre for Development in the light of Radical Theatre, where he states that "the practice of radical theatre in the world generally has taken different dimensions in order to achieve different results by different scholars. In Nigeria and most countries of the world, radical theatre is gradually been metamorphosed into Community Theatre or Theatre for Development."

It could therefore be agreed that Theatre for Development, in whatever nature, form or nomenclature, is a practice which operates from the perspectives, using the people's own language and idioms of expressions. In this way, theatre is domesticated to suite specific needs, especially as it is taken over and shaped by community people in order to accommodate their needs. The overall goal of this process is to increase transparency and relative accountability in people-centered development. In this case, community members, community-based organizations, women (local) associations, or even officials of the Government are engaged in a process aimed at building their capacity to promote and explore the issue of development in their immediate communities and/or States. It is therefore this study's pre-occupation to discuss TfD as a specialized arm of theatre, advocating the interconnection of gender roles in the face of climate adversity.

Given the forgoing postulations, it becomes evident that Theatre for Development approach has a fundamental potency towards enhancing development and thus embodies a primary role in influencing social change. Elucidating on this concept of development communication, Evans Asante and Samuel Yirenkyi submits that,

Community engagement programs offer the opportunity for community members to reflect on the development avenues and potentials in their local communities which have not been fully tapped and utilised. Behavioral change and local level conscientisation geared towards community development is a shared responsibility. This shared responsibility is achieved when community members engage with each other on a common platform to find solutions to their challenges. Active participation process enables people to raise their own issues with outsiders and encourages them to take responsibility for their own development. (589)

To compliment this submission, Theatre for Development uses the indigenous artistic

forms of the community which make it easier to get the people to participate in it. Theatre in the community for development is meant to awaken the consciousness of the people to the realities that face them. It creates a revolutionary spirit in the people to inspire them to seek for change. This is based on Augusto Boal's (19) argument, that in a dramatic experience, the audiences are not just mere spectators but actors as well and creators of drama, creators of their own world in essence. They are not just recipients of a finished product but part and parcel of the creative process. To Boal, theatre is a language that is capable of being utilized by anyone. Based on this viewpoint, Aondowase Boh (18) further asserts that in order to understand the role of theatre for development, one must keep in mind its main objective which is to change the people or spectators, the ignorant in the theatrical phenomenon into subject, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action. That is, both the actor and audience reserve the right to think for themselves often in opposition to the character's behavior that is not in line with his progress and development.

Affirming this position Nda, U.S. And Ekong F.U (440) submits that theatre for Development also known as community theatre, is the ultimate in the arts utilization process. It arises out of development communication with the sole intention of giving back the theatre to the people for them to use in communicating among themselves, and with others, discussing and proffering suggestive means of creating better situations for human thrive and continuity. When one observes the modus operandi of TfD as against the conventional mainstream media like Television, Film and Radio, it becomes apparent that there is a failure in feedback, and this singular factor cannot guarantee development communication. As a result, the tool of TfD becomes more potent in communicating development and ensuring feedback and follow-up action. It is this potency that has prompted its proposal for communicating climate change and its impact on gender roles, with a focus on the Angwan-Toni community in Nasarawa state.

Climate Change in Nigeria

The reality of climate change has started dawning on various parts of the world. The depletion of the ozone layer through over-heating of the atmosphere, caused by the actions and inactions of humans, has resulted in the thawing of the ice at the polar regions, which has resulted in the overflow of oceans leading to massive floods in hitherto dry lands and causing destruction of lives of persons and animals, infrastructure and the disruption of services essential for human existence and continuity (Nda & Ekong 437). Such has been the effect of climate change that global and local measures need to be enunciated, agreed upon and implemented, in the bid to save the planet earth. These measures can only succeed if the humans are made to appreciate the gravity of the situation. This is based on the understanding that humans need to be sensitized and people mobilized in a mass effort to reverse the trend.

The need for a conscious sensitization of people on the effects of climate change has become paramount, given the fact that everyone on the face of the earth stands affected in one way or the other. The phenomenon poses a serious threat to people worldwide and impacts their livelihood to varying degrees. According to the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) "climate change is perhaps the biggest challenge facing humanity. It is complex and dynamic and requires dimensional and multi-sectoral mitigation and adaptation initiatives within a dynamic policy framework to properly tackle it (2)." Studies reveal that the most vulnerable people experiencing climate change belong to

developing countries and more precisely rural communities where there is a lack of infrastructure to cushion its adversity. This is not to say however, that urban settlements stand a chance to elude the adverse impact of climate change. In fact, the greenhouse effect which serves as one of the primary drivers of climate change is largely attributed to industrial settlements and urban areas, from which extended carbon emissions augment havoc on the climate constitution. Farmers however, predominantly in the rural setups, engage in activities that cause deforestation in the process of clearing and ensuring larger farmlands. When this happens, there is no room left for carbon storage and thus adding to the greenhouse gas emission effect generated in urban and industrial settlements. As a result, the changing climate is adversely affecting the productivity (agricultural) and livelihoods of Nigerians, especially based on the unprecedented growth population.

Population growth in Nigeria has impacted negatively on natural resources and by extension, forest reserves. According to World Bank statistics, Nigeria's population of 158.5 million of 2010 has increased to 206, 139, 587 as at 2020 with an increase of between 2.5 to 2.7 percent per annum (www.worldbank.org). This population growth has emanated several other attendant challenges that have impacted negatively on Nigeria's forest reserves. These include ethnic crises and instability with its attendant characteristics of insecurity, poverty, migration and bigoted ignorance, all of which tend to strain the population into making choices that affect forest reserves and the climate constitution. Such strained choices may include hunting, deforestation activities for the purpose of firewood and charcoal production, timber for exportation; most of such activities carried out illegally against government regulations. In another dimension, increased population growth has augmented demand for industrial production to meet the consumption needs of the growing population. This phenomenon has also propelled transportation activities, all of which activities causes increased emission of green-house gas into the climate constituting a reverse in carbon sink as a result of the earlier presupposition. Consequently, communities relying on natural resources become the worst hit and victims of adverse climate change with its impending consequences of global warming characterized by drought, adverse heat, unprecedented storms, and erosion and many others.

As a result of the foregoing, climate change in Nigeria is evident from [temperature](#) increase, [rainfall](#) variability (increasing [rainfall](#) in coastal areas and decline in rainfall in the continental areas). It also reflects in [drought](#), [desertification](#), rising sea levels, [erosions](#), [floods](#), [thunderstorms](#), burning of fossil fuels, bush fires, [landslides](#), land degradation, more frequent extreme weather conditions and [loss of biodiversity](#). All of which continues to negatively affect human and animal life and also the [ecosystems](#) in [Nigeria](#). Although depending on the location, regions experience [climate change](#) with significant higher [temperatures](#) during the [dry seasons](#) while [rainfalls](#) during [rainy seasons](#) help keep the temperature at milder levels.

The Effect of Climate Change on Gender Roles

Climate change is gradually changing the way we live; the way we make choices and the way we work. In fact, its effects are felt throughout the human existence, knowingly or unknowingly. This in turn has also impacted on interpersonal relationships; the way we relate and the roles we assume in the social and economic spheres. Based on this assertion, it could be conveniently purported that climate change affects gender behavior which

manifest in the respective roles we assume in the society.

According to United Nations “gender inequality coupled with the climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges of our time. It poses threats to ways of life, livelihoods, health, safety and security for women and girls around the world (www.unwomen.org).” One may wonder the correlation between climate change and gender-related issues, but that explains the subtlety which makes the general impact of climate change on the social front elusive. For instance, in a rural setup where there is water scarcity, it automatically becomes the role of the women to find water, irrespective of where, in order to run the household. This is because religio-cultural expectations has reserve the role for her. And in cases where she fails in this duty, a quarrel may erupt between her and spouse, resulting to domestic violence. Whereas, the original contention had been an effect on the climate warming, manifesting in violent torrents within human social relationship. Where its impact makes manifest through health-related issues such as outbreak of cholera, typhoid fever, malaria, etc, women as caregivers are still saddled with their natural responsibility of catering for the victims. In fact, women and girls oftentimes face greater health and safety risks when water and sanitation systems become compromised (www.unwomen.org); and, they tend to take on increased domestic and care work as resources disappear.

Historically, climate change scientists, researchers and policymakers have struggled with how to make the vital connections between gender, social equity, and climate change. As more and more data and research reveal their clear correlation, it becomes relevant to talk about the disparate impacts of climate change and the linkages between women's empowerment and effective, global climate action. Firstly, it is worthy of note that climate change is gender neutral; neither is it a respecter of gender affiliations. When the adversity of climate warming manifests, it is the citizens of earth that suffer the consequences, and no particular gender is spared. However, sources uphold that women and girls experience the greatest impact of the phenomenon, and this amplifies the already existing gender inequalities and thus poses unique threats to their livelihoods, health and safety. According to UN records, women depend more on; yet have less access to natural resources. It states that,

In many regions, women bear a disproportionate responsibility for securing food, water, and fuel. [Agriculture](#) is the most important employment sector for women in low- and lower-middle income countries, during periods of drought and erratic rainfall, women, as agricultural workers and primary procurers, work harder to secure income and resources for their families. This puts added pressure on girls, who often have to [leave school](#) to help their mothers manage the increased burden (www.unwomen.org).

The above expression succinctly captures the unique position of the female gender in the face of climate change. It points out the peculiar roles expected of women in its wake and the intensity with which the increased burden of domestic and social roles tend to limit their individual development and growth. This means therefore, that, climate change is a threat multiplier, especially as it escalates social, political and economic tensions in fragile and conflict-affected settings. As climate change drives conflict across the world, women and girls face increased vulnerabilities to all forms of gender-based violence,

including conflict-related sexual violence, human trafficking, child marriage, and other forms of violence

Given the perception on the impact of climate change on gender roles, this paper investigates the phenomenon in the Angwan-Toni community of Karu Local Government Area of Nassarawa State. The aim is to project Theatre for Development tool as a veritable means of educating the people of the community on the impacts of climate change on gender roles, especially upon the bearing of participatory communication and place-based education theories.

The Target Community: Angwan-Toni Karu Local Government Area Nasarawa State

a. Description

Angwan-Toni is a community situated about ten kilometers on the eastern outskirts of Keffi town. Despite its proximity to Keffi town, it is located in Betti District, Karshi Development Area, Karu Local Government, Nasarawa State. It is preceded by the Gauta community, which is in Keffi Local Government Area. Historically, the community was initially known as Angwan Kalago, due to the abundance of the Kalago trees in the area. However, a Gwandara medicine man later settled in the area, and because of his medicine enterprise, he became so popular that the area was later renamed after him, being Toni, so it would become Angwan-Toni (Community Theatre Report, 2019).

The community has existed over three hundred (300) years; has six satellite communities, and these include the Angwan Bandiko, Gidan Lele, Angwan Rai, Angwan Eggon, Angwan Toni and Angwan Jero. The people of the area are predominantly farmers and their farm produce include rice, corn, yam, sugar cane, and millet. They also have large plantations of perennial (economic) trees such as cashew and mango. The leadership in the area is monarchical in nature where the Sarki-angwan is passed on from father to child, and this monarchy is shared between two households (Field Research: 4th May, 2023).

b. Demography

The community has a population that is comprised of four (4) tribes; the Hausa/Fulani, the Gwandara, the Eggon and the Manda people. The population could be estimated to be slightly above fifty thousand (50000) inhabitants. There is a central market where the community dwellers obtain their wares and groceries and it operates daily. The indigenes practice Islam, Christianity and Traditional religions. Their religious affiliation is largely informed by the tribal orientation of the individuals. The Hausa/Fulani cluster is naturally inclined to the Islamic religion, while the clusters of Manda, Gwandara and Eggon are attuned to Christianity and a few to the traditional religion (Field Research: 4th May, 2023).

c. Climate and Topography

The Angwan-Toni community has dense vegetation made up of trees, most of which are clustered in orchards and forests. It has a rocky topography but largely a savannah formation good for agricultural cultivation. There is a large river, Maikukurai, bordering the community and of which the access road to the community is made possible by a well-constructed bridge across the river. However, the link roads are generally bad, rocky and prone to soil erosion during heavy rains. Even in the dry season, the evidence of erosion still registers in the apparently degraded ecosystem. There are also small hilly

elevations and slopes which also suggests erosions during rains. There are also cases of flooding during which the bridge submerges, hindering free movement, to and fro the community.

d. Meeting the Community

The researcher arrived in the Angwan-Toni community at about 10:30am on Thursday, 4th May, 2023. The researcher was escorted by two other persons, Mr. Abubakar and Mr. Fanan and a driver, Mallam Saidu. They drove to the Sarki's residence to obtain permission to interact with the community members and acquire the needed information for the research. Although the Sarki was not present, he soon returned to meet the researcher and her team. The Sarki then sanctioned the research and the process was initiated.

The research was orchestrated in both paradigms of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative approach which made use of the questionnaire format was first embarked upon, during which eighty (80) questionnaires were distributed to elicit responses from the respondents. Twenty (20) questionnaires were distributed each to the four primary sub-groups in the area; namely – Hausa/Fulani, Gwandara, Manda and Eggon. When this process was completed, the researcher again embarked on the qualitative research process using the primary research tools such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informants Interviews (KIIs), Structured Interviews (SIs) and Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs). Efforts were made to ensure the thoroughness of facts and the vigorous process gave the researcher an opportunity of participant observation of both the community, and the individuals, through their responses.

After the information collation process which took a better of five (5) hours, the researcher and her team proceeded to visit the strategic places and amenities in the community. This was in order to help verify the data collated through the research. The researcher visited the three nursery schools in the area, the mosque, the Ecwa and Baptist churches, the market, motorised bore-holes, and the bridge across the river leading into the community.

Findings

Responses elicited from community members highlighted several critical impacts of climate change on individual livelihood. These findings underscores the need for social advocacy, using the participatory approach of Theatre for Development to engage and create the needed awareness on climate change to enable indigenes cope and manage individual roles amidst climate crisis. The following were identified as some of the several effects of climate change in the community::

- **Drought and Water Scarcity:** During dry seasons, women bear increased burdens of walking longer distances in search of water as they are the primary water providers.
- **Tree Felling for Fuel:** Women contribute to deforestation as a means of livelihood, unaware of the environmental consequences it posit.
- **Limited Education Access:** Lack of formal education especially for women, hampers awareness and their adaptive capacity.
- **Flooding:** Constant flooding in the area disrupts agricultural production, and hamper social and economic activities, including school attendance and market access.

- **Health and Gendered Labor:** Women and girls are faced with increase gender and sexual violence, increase climate-related diseases and increase care giving responsibilities and are left no little or no time for their personal advancement.

A prior TfD workshop in 2019 conducted in the area demonstrated the community's receptiveness to participatory interventions, showing progress in girl-child education, albeit strapping religious institutions.

Discussion

Based on the forgoing, the study highlights the potency of community advocacy, focusing on climate change, it impacts and equipping community dwellers with the necessary knowledge and arming them of their various labour roles and responsibilities in the wake of climate change. By understanding the concept, it causes and diverse manifestation. These will enable rural dwellers to re-calibrate their choices in dealing with the environment. Haven gained the needed knowledge of the destructive effects of global warming including, its negative tenets on interpersonal relations. Paying adequate attention to complementing gender labor roles and enable women manage the adverse impact of climate crisis on their livelihood. TfD emerges as a culturally resonant medium to communicate climate science, by encouraging behavioral change, and fostering dialogue among the rural populace. By engaging community members as co-actors, TfD bridges the gap between scientific discourse and local realities.

Conclusion

Dwelling on climate change action on gender labour roles in Nigerian rural community. The study gathered that, climate change is an emerging enormous challenge facing the global existence and poses a threat to humanity itself. Its manifestation however, are credited to both the actions and inactions of man in his daily activities. It was established that developing economies, like Africa, tend to feel the greatest impact of climate change as they lack the resources to cushion and/or manage its intensities. In the wake of this impending challenge, is the fate of women and girls, who due to their biology and unique gender responsibilities tend to experience the greatest impact of climate adversity. Unfortunately, climate change is communicated mostly in seminars, conferences and the mainstream media and in the process, rural dwellers are sidelined and left to their ignorance. The study underscored the use of Theatre for Development (TfD) been a Participatory Communication strategy to stir up sensitization at the grassroots and help create awareness to rural dwellers on the causes and effects of climate change and it adverse impact on gender labour roles, using the Angwan-Toni community, Karu LGA as case study and encourage collaboration between government, NGOs, and academic institutions to scale community-centered climate interventions.

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