check for updates

Non-Governmental Organizations and the Policy Process: A Reflection on the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy, 2011

Ibironke D. ADEFISOYE[1]
Taiwo O. ADEFISOYE[2*]

[1]Center for Gender and Development Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.
Email: oluwadawalola@gmail.com
[2]Department of Political Science, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.
Email: taiwo.adefisoye@gmail.com

Abstract

The policy process is a complex one that requires formal and informal linkages between governmental and other actors. Collaboration between the government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is pivotal to the attainment of the goals of gender equality, which is to provide equal opportunities for men and women in the society. Despite the importance of this policy, studies show that certain factors in a policy environment might inhibit such alignment. Using the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy of 2011 as a case study, this paper examined the importance of NGOs to the policy process of gender equality policy in Ekiti State. To achieve the objectives, an online survey was carried-out among twenty-two randomly selected workers of NGOs whose Organizations have previously worked on gender-related policies in Ekiti. Besides, Key Informant Interviews were conducted with two civil society experts. Data elicited were presented and analyzed using tables, frequency counts, percentage scores and the descriptive method. Findings showed that NGOs were adequately involved in the formulation and adoption stages of the Policy. However, such involvement was not fully imported into the implementation stage. This was because of the change in government in the State in 2014, which affected the continuity of the policy. This further validates the argument that the implementation stage is often the grave-yard of many good policies in Africa. It was concluded that if Ekiti State wishes to retain its frontline position in the promotion of the gender equality, it must ensure an improved synergy with NGOs and policy continuity.

1. Introduction

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) have played major roles in advancing the ideals of sustainable development, good governance, democratic dividends and other social-economic and political benefits at the local, national and international levels. In many cases, NGOs represent viable non-state actors and watchdogs on government actions and inactions, the voice of the civil population, and a bridge between the people and the government. Suffice to say that NGOs primarily exist to act as veritable checks on the government; and at the same time support the government in certain areas, including but not limited to health, education, disaster management, rights promotion among others areas. With particular reference to policy formulation, execution, monitoring and evaluation, Non-Governmental Organizations all over the world have played active roles. For instance, in 1945, NGOs were instrumental in the inclusion of human rights languages on the United Nations (U.N) Charter (Goel & Tripathi, 2010). Subsequently, NGOs continue to play significant roles in governmental/policy processes.

With respect to gender equality policy, NGOs have played pivotal roles in the recognition, entrenchment and sustenance of the ideals of gender equality-related policies among countries of the world. It is important to note at this juncture that a gender equality policy is generally aimed at providing equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities to women and men in a society so as to achieve their aims and goals irrespective of their sexes. It is also mostly an attempt to abolish all harmful practices that have observed to strengthen the

marginalization of a particular sex. The Government of Canada (2017) posited that the aims of developing a gender equality policy were to: "enhance women's equal participation with men in decision-making; support women and girls in the realization of their human rights and reduce gender inequalities in access to and control of resources and benefits of development". Likewise, the Commonwealth Secretary (2019) had argued that "the objectives of the Commonwealth Gender Equality Document were to provide a clear mandate on mainstreaming gender into every decision making spheres and to promote gender responsive organizational sphere". This is aimed at ensuring the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment for sustainable development in member countries.

With particular reference to Nigeria, the development of the National Gender Policy and its strategic plans were to a very large extent pushed by several NGOs like the National Council for Women Society, the Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative, the League of Democratic Women, Action Aid, the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre, the National Centre for Women Development, the Global Youth Awareness and Development Initiative, the Women Empowerment and Reproductive Health Centre, and the Civil Resources Development and Documentation Centre amongst others (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2008). Afolabi (2019) also noted that women groups (NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, Community Based Organizations) have done so much in advancing the rights of women in Nigeria particularly in political participation. Some of these roles included; sensitization, mobilization, capacity building for women, lobbying government to support women empowerment and advocating for implementation of the international Declaration on Women's Rights to improve lots of women in political participation and in the society at large (Afolabi, 2019).

In the case of Ekiti State, the role of the government in promoting gender equality and women empowerment is notable likewise the participation of International Development Partners, Local NGOs and CSOs. It is worthy of note that Ekiti State ranks first among the thirty-six (36) States in Nigeria with the highest number of laws and policies protecting the rights of women and promoting Gender Equality. Among the laws and policies in existence in Ekiti State are, Ekiti State Gender and Equality Policy, 2011; Widowhood Rights Law, 2002; Female Circumcision (Prohibition) Law, 2006; Child Rights Law, 2006; Disability Law, 2009, Gender Based Violence Prohibition Law, 2011, Equal Opportunities Law, 2013 (Balm in Gilead Foundation for Sustainable Development (BIGIF), 2019).

However, there are several factors that have affected the effective involvement of NGO in policy implementation process. These problems arise from lack of continued government's commitment in the propagation of gender equality-related initiatives and the dictatorial tendencies of certain Chief Executives. It must be noted that the government, which instituted the policy could not secure another four-year term in 2014. On the other hand, its successor did not show sufficient commitment towards the implementation of the policy. Other factors are: absence of funds for NGOs to provide effective monitoring and evaluation of government policies; and low manpower.

1.1. Research Questions

The study is founded on the following questions:
1. What roles do Non-Governmental Organizations play in the policy process?
2. What specific roles did NGOs play in the formulation, execution and evaluation of the Ekit State Gender Equality Policy of 2011?
3. What factors affected NGOs in the policy process of the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy of 2011?
4. How can NGOs be repositioned and encouraged to play more active roles in the policy process in Nigeria/Ekiti?

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this paper is to examine Non-Governmental Organizations and the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy of 2011. Specific objectives are to:
i. Interrogate the roles played by NGOs in the policy process.
ii. Investigate specific roles played by NGOs in the formulation, execution and feedback of the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy of 2011.
iii. Consider such factors that affected NGOs in the policy process of the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy of 2011.
iv. Recommend ways by which NGOs can be repositioned and encouraged to play more active roles in the policy process in Nigeria/Ekiti.

2. Theoretical Framework: Policy Network Theory

To stimulate analysis, this paper adopts the policy network theory as its theoretical handle. The origin of the theory is rather a controversial one, as various scholars have attributed it to different individuals and epoch. Peterson (2003) captured such controversy and narrates that:

> The precise origins of policy network analysis in the public policy literature are a matter of
> dispute. Richardson (2000) claims 'British origins of what is now termed the network

approach'. Rhodes. (1990) concurs that 'American political science was not the major formative influence' on early work which sought to make sense of the British 'post-parliamentary' state using network analysis in the late 1970s. Yet, an eclectic range of early work in the UK, US and Europe on interest intermediation – via both corporatist and pluralist structures and focused on intergovernmental (that is, local-national) and government industry relations – attempted to develop the idea of networks as an analytical concept.

However, scholars including Rhodes. (1990), Bennett and Howlett (1992) and Peterson (1995a) among others have made distinct contributions to the development of the policy network theory particular within the genus of policy studies. For instance, Peterson (2003) posited that the term 'network' is frequently used to describe clusters of different kinds of actor who are linked together in political, social or economic life. In relation to policy, Rhodes (2008) explained that policy networks are "sets of formal institutional and informal linkages between governmental and other actors structured around shared if endlessly negotiated beliefs and interests in public policy making and implementation". Peterson and Bomberg (1999) have also defined policy network as "a cluster of actors, each of which has an interest, or 'stake' in a given policy sector and the capacity to help determine policy success or failure"

It becomes expedient to note that the idea of policy network stems from the belief that the policy system is "an all-encompassing aggregation of all possible state, non-state or private and social actors at local, regional, national, international levels working and interacting within the institutions/policy environment that directly or indirectly affect a specific policy area" (Howlett, Mukherjee, & Koppenjan, 2017). Bennett and Howlett (1992) observed:

> In the course of such interactions, subsystem actors engage in a variety of activities that range from bargaining with each other over policy aims and measures; developing and contesting policy ideas and concepts about their sector, as well as the larger social and political world in which these exist.

These interactions may however be strategic or technical and often involve actors learning from experiences Bennett and Howlett (1992). According to Keast, Mandell, and Agranoff (2014) "the Identification of key actors in policy subsystems or networks, what brings them together, how they interact and what effect their interaction has on a policy, are the major attractions of the policy network theory. Policy network concentrates on elucidating relationships of influence and the direction of interactions which occur in policy-making processes and has not made learning a key or central pillar of analysis and conceptualization (Howlett et al., 2017).

The policy network theory possesses a lot of relevance to this study, especially to such interactions that occur between state and non-state (NGOs) actors in the policy process. It is important to stress that the policy process is a complex one that encompasses policy identification, agenda-setting, policy formulation/adoption, policy implementation/execution and policy evaluation. It therefore becomes expedient for the various actor involved in the formulation, implementation and evaluation to the network in attaining policy goals which most times are predetermined; failure to do this, would adversely affect policy attainment.

3. Conceptual Clarification

3.1. Public Policy

According to Dye (2005) public policy is, "anything a government chooses to do or not to do". This perhaps is the shortest and most concise definition of public policy (Howlett. & Cashore, 2014). Explaining Dye's definition of public policy, Howlett. and Cashore (2014) described policy-making as "a process that involves both technical and political steps of articulating and matching the government goals and means, that is, actions which contain goal(s) and the means to achieve them, however well or poorly identified, justified, formulated and executed".

White (2015) described public policy as "the means by which a government maintains order or addresses the needs of its citizens through actions defined by its constitution that is, a collection of laws and regulations which are established through political process". Policies are often developed to address particular issues of concern. Ikelegbe corroborates the foregoing and explained that "a policy means a course of action or a programme of actions, which is chosen from among several alternatives by certain actors in response to certain problems" (Ikelegbe, 2006).

3.2. The Policy Process

The development of public policy takes a process of many stages as identified by different scholars. The U.S Fire Administration (2017) described the public policy development cycle as "a process that requires good planning, organization and communication skills". The process is a cycle that has one stage leading to the other. Basically, five major stages have been identified as discussed below:
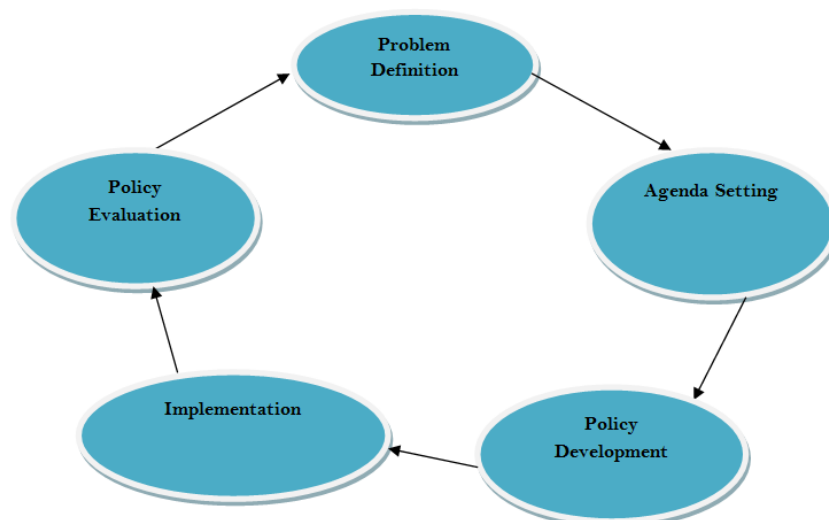
Figurer-1. Stages involved in the policy process.
Source: U.S. Fire Administration, 2017.

i. *Problem Identification and Agenda Setting* – This involve addressing what is happening and why it is an issue of concern. This stage also involves performing a community risk assessment and developing a problem statement. It considers previous actions to address risk; any existing public policies; stakeholders, including proponents and potential opponents; as well as what intervention strategies will work best to address the issue that is whether to develop another policy or modify and existing one. This is the most critical stage as it involves all stakeholders through consultations to correctly identify the problem and set out the overall objective and aim of the policy (Agagu, 2010; Leo, 2015)(U.S. Fire Administration, 2017).

ii. *Policy Formulation*: This stage involves the formulation of the policy. It involves the identification of the guiding principles of the policy and a clear definition of its vision, aims and objectives. Furthermore, a draft of the proposed policy will be produced by the planning team who negotiates on the contents to develop a draft. It is then distributed to stakeholders for comment. The policy is refined and officially submitted for adoption (Agagu, 2010; Leo, 2015)(U.S. Fire Administration, 2017).

iii. *Policy Adoption:* Adoption is the stage during which decisions are made at the governmental level, resulting in a decision that favours one or more approaches to addressing a given problem (Agagu, 2010; Leo, 2015)(U.S. Fire Administration, 2017).

iv. *Policy Communication and implementation:* Following the formal adoption of the policy it should be communicated to all stakeholders to prevent its failure. At this stage, the policy's implementation parameters are established, which can directly affect the eventual outcome of the policy because once a policy has been adopted and launched; it must be adhered to unless there are exceptional circumstances justifying a variation from the policy (Agagu, 2010; Leo, 2015) (U.S. Fire Administration, 2017).

v. *Policy Evaluation:* This stage measures the policy for effectiveness. Modifications are made based on this evaluation. This helps justify the need for the policy, guides the process, and determines which goals are being met, and to what degree. Decision-makers allocate or redirect resources based on evaluation. Evaluation continues throughout the life cycle of a policy (Agagu, 2010; Leo, 2015) (U.S. Fire Administration, 2017).

3.3. Policy Implementation

The policy implementation stage is the stage in the policy circle/process when political decisions are carried-out through organized bureaucracy, public expenditures and the activities of executive agencies (Dye, 2005). It is also regarded as the Achilles heel in the public policy process. Agagu. (2011) in his view remarked that:

> Public policy implementation can be said to be the downstream of the policy process…
> Without implementation, public policy has little or no meaning to citizen. At best, it would
> only raise their hopes until frustration sets in.

Anderson (2011) lends a voice to this foregoing and stated that "if implementation fails, (then) all that precede was of no avail. In other words, it can be posited that "a policy is as good as its implementation". May (2008) observed that the realities of a policy in actual practice often differ from their original intention on paper as a result of certain factors which include distortion by a plethora of unanticipated intervening

variables. May (2008) further stated that these variables may be bureaucratic or institutional, political, ideological, economic, social, environmental or the combination of these factors.

3.4. Gender/ Gender Equality

Gender is the social attributes, opportunities and roles associated with being female and male and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as relations amongst them. Gender Equality, according to the World Health Organisation (2017) refers to the creation of equal chances and opportunities for men and women to access and control of social, economic and political resources. It is also known as equality of opportunity. The International Labour Organization (2019) described Gender equality as a critical element in achieving social and institutional change that can result to sustainable development with equity and growth.

Gender Equality does not mean equal number of men and women or boys and girls in all activities nor men and women or boys and girls are the same, it only signifies an aspiration for a society where both sexes (male and female) are able to live equally fulfilling lives.

3.5. Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Private Society Organizations are often words used to described organizations that are non-profit oriented and are independent of the government. Moss (2006) described Non-Governmental Organizations as 'pressure groups' or 'lobby groups' because of their impact on government and non-governmental groups on world contemporary issues and especially in the aspects of policy formulation, implementation and assessment. NGOs are groups of individuals organized for various reasons. It could be to advocate for a particular cause such as human rights, health, education and environmental protection issue or to carry out programs such as disaster management (Gemill-Hereen & Bamidele, 2002).

Non Profit Expert (2017) described Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) as an organisation that was not founded by a state, and therefore, is typically independent of governments. NGOs often get their funding from private bodies, which makes them independent of the government, thereby enhancing their objectivity in participating in government programs and raising constructive criticism in an attempt to make government accountable to the people. Elaborating the purpose of an NGO, Ranveer (2017) opined that NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, by bringing citizen concerns to the Governments, advocating and monitoring policies and encourage political participation through provision of information.

Ranveer (2017) further explained that NGOs are established to address various issues such as health, good governance, human right, environment, and youth development among several other issues. Olivia (2018) believed NGOs are meant to raise awareness and increase knowledge acquisition through lobbying thereby designing and implementing development-related projects. NGO's are meant to serve specific social or political purposes, and are cooperative, rather than commercial, in nature (Folger, 2019).

4. Non-Governmental Organizations and the Policy Process

Public policy represents government actions and inactions. The formulation and execution of public policy is therefore a necessity if any country or state will ensure that there is orderliness within its borders. Howlett. and Cashore (2014) described policy-making as a process that involves both technical and political steps of articulating and matching the government goals and means. Popoola (2016) has argued that the policy process is "an intricate process involving certain actors in government as well as those outside government (who find relevance in the existence of government)".

Therefore, in achieving the goal of a policy, it is necessary that government and other concerned groups come together in the letter and spirit of popular participation. This corroborates the opinion of the American Government (2019) that "the process of policy-making is muddied by the demands of competing interests with different opinions about society's needs or the role that government should play in meeting them". Policy development involves the coming together of government and necessary stakeholders (also known as concerned groups) to brainstorm on issues that requires immediate attention and the best strategy to address such. Included amongst these concerned groups are the Non-Governmental Organizations because they represent the community groups due to their closeness to the grassroots.

Gemill-Hereen and Bamidele (2002) noted that through the undaunted power of NGOs several social issues have sorted globally. For example, in 1945, NGOs pushed for the inclusion of human rights language on UN Charter. In supporting this view, Akor (2011) opined that NGOs have played crucial roles particularly on gender, health and social inclusion issues in Nigeria. NGOs have also been involved in gathering good practices, advocating and lobbying to various levels of government to encourage the implementation of various resolutions, treaties and international conventions on gender equality to which Nigeria is signatory to on women's right and the advancement of women and girls (Akor, 2011).

Presenting the history and pattern of NGOs' involvement in the policy process in prominent developed democracies in Europe, the (Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 2019) explicated that:

In the developed European democracies, the involvement of representatives of NGOs in the processes of decision- and law-making became a common practice of public governance in the second half of 20th Century. The process of consultations with the concerned parties, including representatives of NGOs, prior to the taking of any political decision or the adoption of a normative act, won recognition as a functioning mechanism leading to a higher quality of the adopted acts and of the legitimacy of the decisions and governance as a whole. This process of involvement of representatives of various public groups directly reflects the main ideas of *"participatory democracy"*, democratisation of the political relations in the developed European countries after the crisis in the representative government and overcoming of the authoritative regimes in some countries in Southern Europe (Spain, Portugal and Greece).

With particular reference to Nigeria (a developing country) and its gender policy, the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 was passed and signed into law by President Goodluck Jonathan in 2015 to compensate for the loopholes in other gender-related acts and laws that previously existed. Such initiative enjoyed the concerted input from NGOs and CSOs in the country. Furthermore, the Not Too Young to Run Bill which was signed into law in 2018, where the age bracket for contesting for a political office was reduced to accommodate the youth. The push for adoption of the bill and the eventual signing of the law was a project of YIAGA by forming a coalition of youth-led NGOs with a representative from each state. The project was funded by the NDI, UKAID and USAID which are International NGOs (INGOs) (Interview with the Executive Director, Inspiration Network, NGO that represented Ekiti State).

5. NGOs and the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy of 2011

5.1. Methodology

In order to examine the roles of NGOs in the policy process, using the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy of 2011 as a case study, an online survey was conducted. In carrying-out the online survey, an online questionnaire was designed and contained items which were drawn from the research questions and objectives of study. Respondents included twenty-two (22) staff of prominent NGOS/CSOs/CBOs that have at one point or the other worked on gender-related issues in Ekiti State especially between 2011 and 2019. One of key informants is at the same time a Research Fellow in Gender Studies. Besides, two (2) renowned development workers from prominent NGOs in Ekiti were interviewed to generate primary data for the study.

5.2. Presentation of Data

Results from the survey are presented below:

Table-1. Background data of respondents.

Question	Responses	Percentage (%)
Are you a development worker (If yes, how long?)	22	100
0-2	7	32
3-5 years	6	27
6-10 years	6	27
Above 10years	3	14
What are your Organizations' Thematic Areas?		
Gender	19	
Health	12	
Capacity Building	1	
Peace	7	
Vulnerability	9	
Good Governance	6	
Environment	1	
What is your position in the organization?		
Executive Director	7	32
Program Officer	3	13
Finance Office	8	46
Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	2	9
Volunteer	2	9
Does your Organization work on Gender-related issues?		
Yes	16	73
No	6	27

Source: Fieldwork, 2019.

Table 1 shows that all the twenty-two (22) respondents were members of staff of selected Non-Governmental Organisations which have worked at one or the other on gender-related programmes. Besides, all the respondents held strategic positions in their organizations.

Table-2. NGOs and the policy process.

Question	Responses	Percentage (%)
NGOs generally play pivotal roles in		
a) Policy Formulation/ Adoption		
Yes	19	86
No	1	5
Not sure	2	9
b) Policy Implementation?		
Yes	15	68
No	6	27
Not sure	1	5
c) Policy Evaluation/Feedback?		
Yes	19	86
No	1	5
Not sure	2	9

Source: Fieldwork, 2019.

Table 2 shows that 19 of the 22 respondents (representing 86%) agreed that NGOs play pivotal roles in the policy formulation/adoption stages of public policy; 27% disagreed that NGOs play important roles in policy implementation while 9% was not sure whether NGOs are involved in policy evaluation/feedback.

Table-3. NGOs and the Ekiti state gender equality policy.

Question	Responses	Percentage (%)
With respect to the 2011 Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy, NGOs played essential roles in its:		
Policy Formulation/ Adoption		
Yes	16	73
No	6	27
Not sure	0	0
Policy Implementation?		
Yes	17	77
No	4	18
Not sure	1	5
Policy Evaluation/Feedback?		
Yes	15	68
No	3	14
Not sure	4	18

Source: Fieldwork, 2019.

With specific reference to the 2011 Ekiti State Gender Equality policy, Table 3 shows that 16 of the 22 respondents agreed that NGOs played essential roles in its formulation and adoption; 17 (73%) agreed to policy implementation, while 68% agreed to policy evaluation and feedback.

Items in the above Table 4 investigated specific challenges encountered by NGOs in the policy process of the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy of 2011. Firstly, 19 respondents (representing 86%) agreed that lack of continuity in the policy was a major challenge experienced by NGOs. On the other hand, respondents were divided on whether NGOs were carried along in the policy process, and particularly on policy formulation/adoption. That 50% of responses show that NGOs were not carried along in the policy formulation/adoption stages may be an indication that certain NGOs were left out in the process.

Similarly, 55% of responses affirmed that NGOs were not involved in the legislative process of the bill which later became the policy. It is important to note that 95% and 95% of responses agreed that lack of involvement of NGOs in the implementation process of the policy; and lack of continuity in government were major external factors that affected the participation of NGOs in the policy process of the 2011 gender equality policy. On the other hand, lack of funds and particularly low organizational capacities in monitoring and evaluation were internal factors that affected the participation of NGOs in the policy process of the Ekiti 2011 policy on gender equality.

Table-4. Challenges of NGOs in the policy process of the Ekiti state gender equality policy.

Question	Frequency	Percentage (%)
What were the challenges of NGOs in the implementation of the Ekiti State Gender and Development Policy?		
a. Lack of continuity in government programmes?		
Yes	19	86
No	1	5
Not sure	2	9
b. NGOs were not adequately carried along in the policy process?		
Yes	7	32
No	9	41
Not sure	6	27
c. Inputs of Stakeholders were not welcomed during policy formulation and adoption?		
Yes	7	32
No	11	50
Not sure	4	18
d. Coalitions of NGOs in Ekiti State were not carried along in the policy legislative process?		
Yes	8	36
No	12	55
Not sure	2	9
e. NGOs couldn't participate actively in the implementation of the Gender Equality Policy.		
Yes	21	95
No	1	5
Not sure	0	0
f. Lack of continuity in Government affected the involvement of NGO in the implementation of the policy.		
Yes	21	95
No	0	0
Not sure	1	5
g. Lack of Funding		
Yes	16	72
No	3	14
Not sure	3	14
h. Low manpower in Monitoring and Evaluation?		
Yes	16	73
No	2	9
Not sure	4	18

Source: Fieldwork, 2019.

Table-5. Repositioning/Encouraging NGOs to play more active roles in the policy process.

Questions	Response
Suggest what can be done to improve the participation of NGOs in the policy process? Transparency in Government	14
Deliberate and constant involvement of NGOs in government programs before policy formulation and adoption of policies	20
Capacity Building for NGOs	17
M and E	1

Source: Fieldwork, 2019.

Table 5 shows suggestions on how to engender an improvement in participation of NGOs in the policy process. Responses revolve around transparency in government, the constant engagement of NGOs in the policy process and capacity building of NGOs.

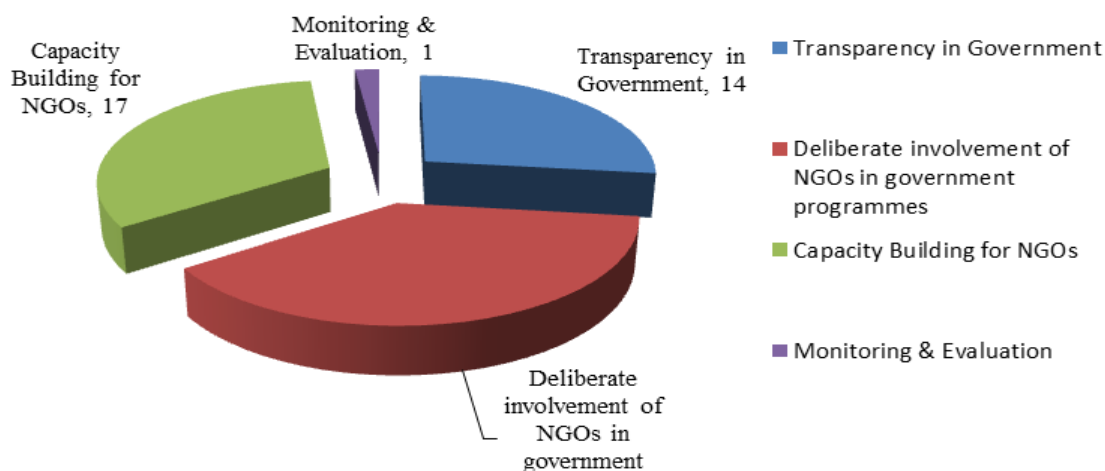## Ways of encouraging the active participation of NGOs in the policy process

Figure-2. A Pie Chart showing respondents' suggestions on how NGOs can play more active roles in the policy process.
Source: Fieldwork, 2019.

5.3. Discussion of Findings

Data obtained through the administration of questionnaires, conduct of KII and review of literature have further entrenched the importance of non-state actors, particularly NGOs in the policy process in open political systems. Anderson (1979) has categorized the crucial actors in the policy process into two, namely: official and unofficial policymakers. According to him, the non-state or un-official actors do not occupy formal public positions or political offices. Besides, they are not in government, but derive their relevance and policy-making roles from government and official policy makers (Popoola, 2016). In addition, NGOs further helped to deal with some deficits of government. This is in consonance with the findings of Tortajada (2016) that the influence of NGOs on public policy at local, national and international level in all aspect of policy making has made them dominant actors in the development arena.

With respect to gender equality policy in Nigeria, it was demonstrated that NGOs have played and still play important roles in the formulation and adoption, implementation and evaluation of the country's gender equality-related policies and laws. It is imperative to re-emphasize that the development of the National Gender Policy and its strategic plans were to a very large extent pushed by several NGOs like the National Council for Women Society, the Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative, the League of Democratic Women, Action Aid, the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre, the National Centre for Women Development, the Global Youth Awareness and Development initiative, the Women Empowerment and Reproductive Health Centre, and the Civil Resources Development and Documentation Centre amongst others (The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2008).

Finding also corroborates the assertion of Afolabi (2019) that "women groups (NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, Community Based Organizations) have done so much in advancing the rights of women in Nigeria particularly in political participation". Some of these roles included sensitization, mobilization, capacity building for women, lobbying government to support women empowerment and advocating for implementation of the international Declaration on Women's Rights to improve lots of women in political participation and in the society at large (Afolabi, 2019).

With respect to the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy of 2011, the finding showed that NGOs played essential roles in its formulation, adoption and to a good, the implementation. However, inadequate synergy between the government and NGOs; and the lack of continuity in government particular between 2014 and 2018 affected the implementation of the policy. It is important to note at this juncture that the implementation stage is often the graveyard of many good policies in most developing countries in which Nigeria is prominent (Olugbenga, 2013). May (2008) observed that the realities of a policy in actual practice often differ from their original intention on paper as a result of certain factors which include distortion by a plethora of unanticipated intervening variables. May (2008) further stated that these variables may be bureaucratic or institutional, political, ideological, economic, social, environmental, or the combination of these factors.

Within the context of Nigeria, the policy implementation is subjected to the whims and caprices of the chief executive and his associates; therefore, there is no commitment to policy continuity or stability (Agagu, 2010). Other issues according to him, are; erratic budgetary allocation, devastating corruption, delay in fund release, lack of political will and the impact of uncertain economic environment. Another notable factor according to this study is poor logistic and appropriate data. Within the context of this study, poor funding and the low institutional

capacity of NGOs are notable challenges that affected the participation of NGOs in the policy process of the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy of 2011.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined Non-Governmental Organizations and the Policy Process using the Ekiti State Gender Equality Law of 2011 as a case study. The policy process, being a complex one requires among other things, the participation of institutional, official and unofficial at every stage: formulation/adoption, implementation and evaluation. In particular, the participation of Non-Governmental Organizations or in a broader parlance, 'NGOs' is considered as not only necessary, but very essential in the success of the policy process. This is because over the years, NGOs have acted as veritable checks on the government; and at the same time supported the government in certain areas, including but not limited to health, education, disaster management, rights promotion among others areas. It is important to note that the roles played in advocating and entrenching equal opportunities for all in the society irrespective of gender differences, have been made visible through the activities of NGOs. The Ekiti 2011 gender equality policy is not an exemption. The roles of NGOs in the process that birthed, implemented and sustained the policy cannot be overemphasized.

In spite such, certain factors including but not limited to lack of continuity in government and limited capacities of NGOs hindered the full participation of NGOs in the overall policy process. It must be stressed that the government, which took over from that of Dr. Kayode Fayemi in 2014 did not show convincing commitment towards the implementation of the Ekiti State Gender Equality Policy of 2011. The development further corroborates and validates the general notion among scholars of public policy analysis that the policy implementation stage is often the grave-yard of many good and well-formulated policies in Africa.

It is therefore important to posit that the success of the policy process is not solely hinged or determined by the ingenuity or sincerity of government, but the participation of other interest groups in which NGOs are prominent. In other words, NGOs do not only provide platforms for interest articulation and aggregation, but also act as machineries for monitoring policy implementation, evaluation and engendering transparency in government.

Therefore, if Ekiti State intends to retain its status as a frontline state in the promotion of the tenets of gender equality, then, there should an improved synergy with NGOs to reflect the ideals of policy network. Besides, the consistency and continuity of government policies, especially, as they relate to gender equality must be ensured. In achieving this, a new government must avoid discontinuing the 'good' policies, programmes and projects of its predecessor. Rather, such policy or programme should be strengthened to achieve its formulation goals; since government is a continuum. Lastly, deliberate efforts should be made by NGO towards capacity building.

References

Afolabi, C. Y. (2019). The invisibility of women's organisations in decision-making process in Africa and its implications. *Frontiers in Sociology, 3*, 40. Available at: 10.3389/fsoc.

Agagu, A. (2010). *Public polity instability and political instability in Nigeria, 23 rdinaugural lecture*. Nigeria: University of Ad-Ekiti.

Agagu., A. A. (2011). *Public policy processes, public policy analysis and development: Selected cases and issues*. Akure.

Akor, O. (2011). Nigeria: The role of NGOs on the gender agenda" Daily trust 25 November, 2011. Retrieved from: https://allafrica.com/stories/201111250921.html 28/7/2019.

American Government. (2019). What is public policy. Retrieved from: https://courses.lumenlearnings.com/amgovernment/chapter/what-is-public-policy/. [Accessed 3/9/2019].

Anderson, J. E. (1979). *Public policy-making*. New York, USA: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Anderson, J. E. (2011). *Public policy making*. Boston: Wadsworth.

Balm in Gilead Foundation for Sustainable Development (BIGIF). (2019). *Training pack on gender advocacy and programming*. Ado-Ekiti: Ado-Ekiti: MacAnthony Venture.

Bennett, C. J., & Howlett, M. (1992). The lessons of learning: Reconciling theories of policy learning and policy change. *Policy Sciences, 25*(3), 275-294. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00138786.

Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law. (2019). Participation of NGOs in the process of policy and law-making: Comparative analysis. Retrieved from: http://www.icnl.org/research/resources/ngogovcoop/partngo.pdf [Accessed 12/11/2019. Retrieved on 3/9/2019].

Commonwealth Secretary. (2019). Commonwealth secretariat gender equality policy. Retrieved from: https://thecommonwealth.org/about-us/gender-equality-policy. [Accessed 3/9/2019].

Dye, T. (2005). *Understanding public policy*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development. (2008). National gender policy strategic framework (Implementation Plan). *Federal Republic of Nigeria 2008-2013*.

Folger, J. (2019). What is an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization)? Retrieved from https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/13/what-is-non-government-organization.asp 23/7/2019.

Gemill-Hereen, B., & Bamidele, I. A. (2002). The role of NGOs and civil society in global environmental governance: Options and opportunities. Retrieved from: www.researchgate.net/publication/228786506_The_role_of_ngos_civil_society_in_global_environmental_governance. [Accessed 3/9/2019].

Goel, V., & Tripathi, M. K. (2010). The role of NGOs in the enforcement of human rights: An overview. *The Indian Journal of Political Science, 71*(3), 769-793.

Government of Canada. (2017). Policy on gender equality. Retrieved from: www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-fundamental-policy-politique.uspx?lang=eng [Accessed 12/12/2019].

Howlett, M., Mukherjee, I., & Koppenjan, J. (2017). Policy learning and policy networks in theory and practice: The role of policy brokers in the Indonesian biodiesel policy network. *Policy and Society, 36*(2), 233-250. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2017.1321230.

Howlett., M., & Cashore, B. (2014). Conceptualizing public policy. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304869764_Conceptualizing_Public_Policy. [Accessed 12/12/2019].

Ikelegbe, A. O. (2006). *Public policy analysis. Concepts, issues and cases.* Lagos: Imprint Services.

International Labour Organization. (2019). Gender equality. Retrieved from: https://libguides.ilo.org/gender-equality-en. [Accessed 12/12/2019].

Keast, R., Mandell, M., & Agranoff, R. (2014). *Network theory in the public sector: Building new theoretical frameworks.* New York: Routledge.

Leo, I. (2015). Policy development: Steps in policy development, Retrieved from: http://www.leoisaac.com/policy/top132.htm. 23/7/2019.

May, P. J. (2008). *Policy design and implementation, in Peters, B.G and Pierre, J. (Eds.), Handbook on Public Administration.* London: SAGE Publications.

Moss, J. (2006). Non-governmental organizations influence policy around the world. Retrieved from: https://www.google.com/amp/s/learningenglish.voanews.com/amp/126546.html. [Accessed 13/2/2019].

Non Profit Expert. (2017). NGOs – non-governmental organizations. Retrieved from: www.google.com/amp/s/www.nonprofitexpert.com/ngos-non0governmental-organizations/amp/. [Accessed 21/10/2019].

Olivia, R. (2018). What is the purpose of NGO? Retrieved from: https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-purpose-of-NGO. 23/7/2019.

Olugbenga, E. O. (2013). Public policy as dividends of democracy: An appraisal of the Abiye safe motherhood programme in Ondo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Developing Countries Studies, 3*(8).

Peterson, J. (1995a). Decision-making in the European union: Towards a framework for analysis. *Journal of European Public Policy, 2*(1), 69–93.

Peterson, J. (2003). *Policy network, Vienna: Institute for advanced studies.* Vienna.

Peterson, J., & Bomberg, E. (1999). *Decision-making in the European union.* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave.

Popoola, O. O. (2016). Actors in decision-making and the policy process. *Global Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Science, 5*(1).

Ranveer, R. (2017). What is the purpose of NGO? Retrieved from: https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-purpose-of-NGO. 23/7/2019.

Rhodes, R. A. W. (2008). *Policy network analysis, in Moran, M., Rein, M., and Goodin, R.E. (Eds.), The Oxford handbook of Public Policy.* Oxford New York: Oxford University Press.

Rhodes., R. A. W. (1990). Policy networks: A British perspective. *Journal of Theoretical Politics, 2*(2), 293–317.

Richardson, J. (2000). Government, interest groups and policy change. *Political Studies, 48*(5), 1006–1025.

Tortajada, C. (2016). Nongovernmental organizations and influence on global public policy. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies, 3*(2), 266-274.

U.S Fire Administration. (2017). The public policy development cycle. Retrieved from: www.usfa.fema.gov/training/coffee_break/053117.html. [Accessed 10/7/2019].

White, D. (2015). What is public policy – definition, types, process and examples. Retrieved from: https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-public-policy-definition-types-processexamples.html#. [Accessed 10/7/2019].

World Health Organisation. (2017). Gender Definitions, Retrieved from: www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/gender-definition/en/ 2/8/2019.

Appendix

List of Interviews

Interview with the Executive Director, Inspiration Network, NGO that represented Ekiti State, on the 10th of October, 2019 at the office of the Organization located in Ado-Ekiti.

Interview with Dr. Yemisi Afolabi, a Research Fellow at the Center for Gender and Development Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti and a former Director, Ekiti Development Foundation (EDF) on 19th November, 2019.