

Rural Women Involvement in the Eradication of Poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria is endowed with abundant human resources, but it is more in quantity than quality, due to low skill acquisition and absence of training and re-training. Illiteracy remains a very serious problem; hence there is poverty in almost every nook and cranny of our society. The study therefore investigated the involvement of rural women in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria. Four research questions guided this study. The population was 360 respondents which were selected from 210 registered women organisations in Anambra State. Stratified random sampling technique was used. The instrument used was the questionnaire for involvement of rural women in eradication of poverty (QURWEP). Mean and standard deviation were used in analysing the research questions. The following major findings emerged: the rural women agreed that if well empowered, given access to infrastructures, it will be very possible for them to contribute meaningfully and be involved in the eradication of poverty. The recommendation of this work is that the government should provide funds, accessible adult education and skill training relevant to the rural women as this will enable them to be involved in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State and the country at large.

Keywords: Poverty, Eradication, Rural Women, Natural Endowment, Unemployment.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Poverty has been a long standing threat to the progress and well being of humanity. Agreeably, the problem of poverty is so enormous that its eradication remains a priority to the various governments of the third world countries, Nigeria inclusive. According to World Bank, (2000), in Africa, for example, estimates of over 200 million people are wallowing in abject poverty. About 45 to 50 percent of sub-Saharan African lives below international poverty line of one American dollar per day.

To underscore the international concern for this problem, the United Nations declared 1996, international year for the eradication of poverty and October 17th of each year has also been set aside as international day for the eradication of poverty worldwide. The decade from 1997 to 2006 was also declared United Nations Decade for eradication of poverty. The world millennium development goal number one is on poverty eradication. In Nigeria, National Planning Commission (NPC) (2004), stated that about two-third of Nigerian people are poor, despite living in a country with vast potentials of human and natural endowment. Although revenues from crude-oil have been increasing over the past decades, rural women in Anambra State, Nigeria have been falling deeper into poverty. Obasanjo and Makogunje (1991), is of the view that if rural women should be able to exercise their sovereignty and assume responsibility for development and eradicate poverty, they must have necessary resources, adequate revenue allocation from the federal and state services to enable them eradicate poverty. the question is, will they be able to achieve it? According to the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) Poverty Profile (2011), the rising profile of poverty has been assuming a worrisome dimension. Nigerians and rural women in Anambra State, currently live below poverty line of one dollar per day. Also, Central Bank of Nigeria Poverty Assessment Report (2000), reveals that by 1960, 15 percent of the population were living in one form of poverty or the other, by 1980, the number of those living in poverty has risen to 20 percent. This was supported by the evidence from the National Consumers Survey of 1999 which says that nearly 70 percent of Nigerians were living in poverty, about 43 percent in urban and 50 percent in rural areas predominantly the rural women. Okiy (2003) viewed rural women as a basic tool for economic development. Noting that information is an important ingredient in any developmental process.

Ezekwesili (2013) lamenting on the high rate of poverty in the country, says that Nigerians had lost dignity because of ravaging poverty arising from poor rural dwellers, corruption and lack of investments in education. Ezekwesili (2013) further described Nigerians as a paradox of kind of wealth that breeds poverty. She traced the trends of Nigerian population in poverty since 1980 to 2010, and observed that the more we earned from oil, the larger the population of poor citizens. World Bank Report (2002) also noted that poverty is on the increase in Nigeria.

Poverty means different things to different people. Ihejirika (2011) equated poverty to a complex multidimensional problem, which has to do with lack of control over resources, including land, skills, knowledge, capital and social connections. Ihejirika (2011) opined that poverty in Nigeria assumes a wider dimension in rural areas, where the larger populace of rural women live mainly as small scale farmers, fishermen, and women herdsmen etc. This was supported by UNDP (2004), which attests that poverty is more pronounced in the rural areas and that rural women are mostly affected. It is becoming very difficult for people to perform obligatory functions to their household in feeding, housing, education, clothing and so on. Inability to meet these basic needs are indices of poverty, which the breadwinner's ability to provide to the dependent pre-disposes him to have low self moral, which is a strong index of psychological unwillingness (Sokoya, 1998).

Many Nigerians cannot provide for their basic needs of life, especially the rural women in Anambra State, Nigeria. This becomes a very serious problem to our society. The tasks which the rural women in Anambra State, Nigeria are expected to perform and the skills needed to carry them out vary. The African rural women like most rural women in Anambra State, Nigeria, must be able to eliminate malnutrition from her family and has major responsibility of lifting herself out of poverty. Isa (1998), is of the view that rural women suffer from acute low productivity and ignorance, which are also direct consequences either inadequate or total lack of credit facility. Therefore, bearing in mind the enormous roles which the rural women in Anambra State must perform in order to increase the standard of living of their families, there is an urgent need to look into the rural women involvement in poverty eradication in Anambra State, Nigeria. Ediomen et al (2010), is of the view that when resources are put in the hands of the women, it yields more dividends to development of the economy at large. As a result of high rate of poverty in the country, the federal government came up with elaborate poverty eradication programmes such as Directorate of Food Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI), Community Action Programmes for Poverty Alleviation (CAPP), National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), Better Life for Rural Women, among others. However, despite all these efforts, poverty still persists among the rural women in Anambra State, Nigeria. In the state, most projects aimed at reducing poverty view the poor rural women as recipients of the benefits of development instead of active participants. There have been previous and several attempts in the past at poverty reduction in Anambra State, Nigeria. But it is highly regrettable that despite all these efforts on poverty reduction by various governments, it seems they have not realized their aims in concrete terms as poverty, hunger and unemployment still persist in our country, Anambra State inclusive. This could be attributed to non-involvement of rural women in poverty eradication programmes in Anambra State, Nigeria. It is based on this premise that the researcher investigated the involvement in rural women in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

There are many factors which militate against rural women in Anambra State, Nigeria towards contributing to poverty reduction. They include illiteracy, customs, beliefs and attitudes, absence of property and inheritance rights, inadequate health care services, less participation in decision making, lack of skills, male migration and urban drift, etc. All these have made it impossible for the involvement of rural women in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria. Also, poor infrastructural facilities have been another serious problem of rural women for their full involvement in the eradication of poverty. Such factors include social amenities, inadequate credit facilities to agricultural productivity. The importance of credit facilities to poverty reduction cannot be over-emphasized. It was revealed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (2005) that economic growth cannot be achieved without providing access to boost the rural women who are always larger in number to enable them to be involved in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.

There is, therefore, need for sensitivity on the social cultural barriers that may inhibit rural women involvement in poverty eradication programmes in Anambra State, Nigeria. It is against this background that the researcher investigated the rural women involvement in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the involvement of rural women in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically the study investigated:

1. the level of involvement of rural women in the eradication of poverty through agriculture in Anambra State, Nigeria;
2. the level of involvement of rural women in the eradication of poverty through credit facilities in Anambra State, Nigeria;
3. the level to which rural women have access to productivity resources in eradication of poverty in Anambra State; and
4. the factors militating against the rural women involvement in eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the levels of rural women involvement in the eradication of poverty through agriculture in Anambra State, Nigeria?
2. What are the levels of rural women involvement in the eradication of poverty through credit facilities in Anambra State, Nigeria?
3. To what extent does the rural women have access to productivity resources in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria?
4. What are the factors militating against the rural women's involvement in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The design of this study is a descriptive survey design. This design according to Nworgu (2006) tries to explain the major elements and characteristics of any phenomenon or attitude. Descriptive survey design focuses on people and their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivation and behaviour. The design is appropriate for this study, because it could be used to attain the purposes of the study by eliciting responses from the respondents on the involvement of rural women in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.

The study was carried out in Anambra state, Nigeria. It covers all the 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the state.

The population of the study was 360 respondents which were selected from two hundred and ten (210) registered women organizations in Anambra State, Nigeria. (Source: Anambra State, Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Awka, 2005).

The sample size for the study was 360 respondents. The researcher used stratified random sampling technique in the selection of the respondents. The 21 local government areas (LGAs) in the state were used and stratified into three that is, those in the three senatorial zones of Anambra State from which two L.G.As were randomly selected from each group. There was a total of 7 L.G.As in each zone in which 2 L.G.As were selected to represent each zone. A total of 6 L.G.As as was finally selected. The first 2 L.G.As were derived from Anambra North senatorial zone which include Ayamelum and Anambra East L.G.A's. The second 2 L.G.As were derived from Anambra Central included Awka North and Anaocha, L.G.As while the third 2 L.G.As were derived from Anambra South senatorial zone, which include Orumbra North and Ihiala L.G.As of the state. These local government areas were selected based on their rural characteristics. Ten women organizations were selected from each of the L.G.As and finally 6 rural women were randomly selected as respondents from each of the ten women organizations in each L.G.A Selected. To this end, 60 rural women were selected as respondents from each L.G.A. In all, a total of 360 rural women participated in the study. The breakdown of the respondents is shown in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Composition of the sample based on the local government areas.

Senatorial Zone	L.G.As	Headquarters	No. of Respondents
Anambra North			
1.	Ayamelum	Anaku	60
2.	Anambra East	Otuocha	60
Anambra Central			
1.	Awka North	Achalla	60
2.	Anaocha	Nneni	60
Anambra South			
1.	Orumbra North	Ekwulobia Ihiala	60
2.	Ihiala	Ihiala	60
Total			360

Source: Anambra State, Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Awka, 2005.

The instrument for this study is structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled Questionnaire for Involvement of Rural Women in the Eradication of Poverty (QIRWEP), which was used to collect the required information from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part A sought to collect personal data on the respondents, while part B which has 16 items was arranged in four clusters to elicit information from rural women on their involvement in the eradication of poverty through agriculture, credit facilities, and access to productivity and problems militating against involvement in the eradication of poverty. The items in the sub-sections were obtained from relevant literature on eradication of poverty. The QIRWEP was structured on a modified four point Likert type scale of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The instrument made up of 25 items was subjected to face validation and construct validation. The face

validation was done by two specialists in educational administration and two in measurement and evaluation. They were requested to rate the relevance, adequacy and comprehensiveness of the items of QIRWEP. Their expert observation, comments and suggestions were incorporated in the modification of the QIRWEP consisting of the 16 items used for the study.

The reliability of the instrument was tested using 30 respondents from Ogbam L.G.As of Anambra State, Nigeria, which was not selected for the study, but has similar characteristics with the target population. A total of 30 subjects responded to the items. The Cronbach alpha method was used to estimate the reliability of index because the items of the instrument were not dichotomously scored. The consistency for each subsection of the instrument was established and result yielded .72, .91, .80 and .90 for each of the clusters. The overall value of 0.91 was obtained showing that the instrument was reliable.

Copies of the 16 items of QIRWEP were administered to 360 rural women in the 6 L.G.As of Anambra State, Nigeria. The researcher visited the areas and administered the questionnaire to the subjects personally on their meeting days. The essence of administering the instruments personally was to make clarifications on the items whenever the need arose. This reduced likely errors that could have occurred in the process of filling the responses items of the QIRWEP. Based on this 98% return of the instrument was achieved.

Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions. Any range above 2.50 is agreed on, while any range below 2.50 is disagreed on.

Results

Data was analysed according to the research questions.

Research Question 1

What are the levels of rural women involvement in the eradication of poverty through agriculture in Anambra state, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean ratings (\bar{x}) and standard Deviation(s) of rural women involvement in the eradication of poverty through agriculture in Anambra State, Nigeria.

S/N	Rural Women Involvement in Eradication of Poverty	\bar{x}	S	Interpretation
1	R/W are involved in the eradication of poverty through agriculture in A/S, Nigeria	2.05	1.01	Disagree
2	Empowerment of rural women will enable them to contribute to eradication of poverty	2.99	1.12	Agree
3	Rural women lack ownership of land and it impairs them from contributing fully to poverty eradication.	3.06	1.08	Agree
4	Traditional practices impair rural women from participating in the eradication of poverty	3.09	1.03	Agree

The results in Table 2 indicate the responses of rural women on their involvement in the eradication of poverty through agriculture. From the above, it is observed that items, 2, 3 and 4 emphasize that empowerment of rural women will enable them to contribute to eradication of poverty, lack of ownership impairs them from contributing fully to eradicating poverty and that traditional practices impair rural women from participating in the eradication of poverty, while item I which emphasizes that rural women are involved in the eradication of poverty through agriculture has a mean rating of 2.05.

These therefore, imply that the rural women agree to the fact that if they are empowered, they would will contribute to the eradication of poverty, and if given ownership of land they would contribute to the eradication of poverty and when they are allowed to participate in the traditional practices they will contribute to the eradication of poverty, while they disagree that they cannot eradicate poverty through agriculture.

Research Question 2

What is the level of rural women's involvement in the eradication of poverty through credit facilities in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean ratings (\bar{x}) and standard deviation of level of rural women involvement of poverty through credit facilities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

S/N	Rural women eradication of poverty through credit facilities	\bar{x}	SD	Interpretation
5.	All the rural women have access to credit facilities to enable them to eradicate poverty.	1.74	1.08	Disagree
6.	Rural women work for wages to enable them to eradicate poverty.	3.14	1.11	Agree
7.	Many rural women experience domestic violence in the process of their contribution towards eradication of poverty.	2.11	1.02	Disagree
8.	Credit facilities are grossly inadequate in rural areas.	3.03	1.20	Agree

Table 3 above showed that of the 4 items, 6 and 8 were rated 3.14 and 3.03. That is to say that rural women work for wages to enable them to eradicate poverty. It was equally agreed that credit facilities is grossly inadequate in rural areas to contribute to the eradication of poverty. While items 5 and 7 disagreed that when rural women have access to credit facilities that will enable them to eradicate poverty. The rural women equally disagree that many rural women experience domestic violence in the process of their contribution towards eradication of poverty.

Research Question 3

To what extent does the rural women have access to productivity resources in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Mean ratings (\bar{x}) and standard deviation of level the rural women have access to productivity resources in eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.

S/N	Level of rural women access to productivity resources in eradication of poverty	\bar{x}	SD	Interpretation
9.	All rural women have access to productivity resources	2.12	1.21	Disagree
10.	Inaccessibility to productive resources have been the bane of rural women participation in poverty eradication.	3.13	.99	Agree
11.	Rural women's involvement in productivity resources causes poverty.	3.09	1.04	Agree
12.	Improvement of rural women access to production resources is central to addressing poverty.	3.25	.96	Agree

In table 4 above, the rural women agreed that inaccessibility to productive resources have been the bane of their participation in poverty eradication. They also agreed that their non-involvement in productive resources causes poverty. They equally agreed that their improvement or access to productive resources is central to addressing poverty. While they disagreed that they have any access to productive resources.

Research Question 4

What are the factors militating against the rural women non-involvement in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Table 5: Mean ratings (\bar{x}) and standard deviation of factors militating against the rural women involvement in eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.

S/N	Factors militating against rural women involvement in eradication of poverty	\bar{x}	SD	Interpretation
13	Rural women poor access to infrastructures impede any meaningful contribution.	3.14	1.11	Agree
14.	Lack of rural women participation in decision-making impedes their contribution.	3.05	1.05	Agree
15.	Most rural women are illiterate and as such they cannot contribute to the eradication of poverty.	3.09	1.11	Agree
16.	The high sensitivity on social culture barriers.	2.97	1.14	Agree

The table 5 above reveals that all items on this section on factors militating against the rural women involvement in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria were agreed on by the respondents. This is because the mean ratings were 3.14 for item 13; 3.05 for item 14; 3.09 for item 15 and 2.97 for item 16. This implies that the rural women non-access to infrastructure impede any meaningful contribution to poverty eradication.

Lack of rural women's participation in decision making impede their contribution towards poverty eradication, again they agreed that most rural women are illiterates and as at such they cannot contribute abundantly to the eradication of poverty. They equally agreed that high insensitivity of the rural women to social cultural barriers does not allow them to contribute towards poverty eradication.

Discussion

From Table 2 above, the rural women agreed that if they are well empowered and given access to ownership of land and allowed to participate in traditional practices, they will contribute positively towards the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria. This is buttressed by Oki (2003) who viewed rural women as a basic tool for economic development, noting that information is an important ingredient in that developmental process. He opined that the rural women needs a bit of information to create awareness that will enable them to contribute their quota towards the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria, hence the involvement of rural women in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.

From Table 3 above, the rural women agreed that they work for wages to enable them to contribute towards eradication of poverty. They equally agreed that credit facilities is grossly inadequate in rural areas to enable them contribute towards eradication of poverty. Isa (1998) is of the view that rural women suffer from acute low productivity and ignorance, which are also direct consequence of either inadequate or total lack of credit facility, hence the involvement of rural women in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria is badly affected.

Table 4 above shows that inaccessibility to productive resources has been the bane of their non-participation in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria. Also, their non-involvement in the to productive resources causes poverty. Equally, their empowerment on access to productive resources is central to addressing poverty. Ediomu et al (2010) is of the view that when resources are put in the hands of the women, it yields more dividends to development of the economy at large. Resources in the hands of women are powerful tool, as they tend to manage it well, which can lead to eradication of poverty, when they handle resources. Its result is healthier household, healthier children and economic well being of the entire populace. This in turn leads to eradication of poverty from one household to the federal level; hence, the involvement of the rural women in the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria is important.

From the Table 5 above, it is evident that the rural women agreed that poor access to infrastructure, lack of rural women participation in decision-making, illiteracy of the rural women, and high insensitivity to social-cultural barriers of the rural women have made it impossible for them to contribute towards eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria. Poverty constitutes the major barriers to rural women development and their involvement in eradication of poverty, contrary to the right of every citizen to enjoy the wealth, resources and services rendered by the government without discrimination or neglect. Obasanjo and Mabogunje (1991) maintained that for rural women to be able to exercise their sovereignty and assume responsibility for development and eradication of poverty, they must have necessary resources, adequate revenue allocation from federal and state sources and internal capacity to generate their own revenue locally as well as access to relevant and desirable resource productivity for eradication of poverty. Again, gross sensitivity to gender effects of poverty and the need of rural women to eradicate poverty can reduce gender differences both in the access to resources and its control, thereby increasing the welfare of the rural women and children, hence the involvement of rural women in eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this research.

1. Recognizing the importance of rural women for national development and the eradication of poverty if given adequate attention and support, the adult education should involve more of the rural women in their adult literacy programs. The literacy programs should be directed towards the needs of the rural women. Equally, the adult education agents should make use of the findings of the research by actively involving the rural women in programmes formulation and implementation, such as to enable the rural women partake in the eradication of poverty in their locality.
2. Government through its appropriate agents, policy makers and administrators should serve as a guide to the rural women in formulating policies and designing programmes that will improve the lives of the rural women.
3. Government should provide funds, accessible adult education and skill training relevant to the rural

- women. This will enable them to be involved in the eradication of poverty in the State or the country at large.
4. Government should work hard to support and promote women's access to credit facilities, as this will enable the rural women to contribute tremendously towards the eradication of poverty in Anambra State, Nigeria.
 5. Government should harmonise modalities for coordinating and formalizing procedures, policies, establish standards and regulate the better way of involving the rural women in planning and use of infrastructure to ensure that their involvement will meet their needs in the eradication of poverty in the state and country at large.

Conclusion

Since rural women constitute about a half of the total population of Nigeria, Anambra State, inclusive, majority have been acknowledged to be living in rural areas as small scale poor illiterates farmers. Yet, they are the backbone of agriculture which is a major stay of Nigerian economy. The rural women are the centre for family life and custodians of culture and fundamental values of society. In Anambra State, Nigeria, for poverty eradication efforts to yield fruitful results, these rural women need to be educated. Education is an empowerment tool for poverty eradication in any state or country. Education if properly acquired will wipe out ignorance, create awareness, broaden the mind and develop their human potential and consequently pave way for poverty alleviation, among the rural poor women in Anambra State, Nigeria as a whole.

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