

**INFORMATION SERVICES FOR LIFE REHABILITATION AND EMPOWERMENT
OF WOMEN IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA**

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence information services for life rehabilitation and empowerment of women in Niger state, Nigeria. The objectives of the study include: to find out socio-economic and political programmes available to women in Life Rehabilitation, the various vocational Skills the participants are exposed to by Life-Rehab; the preferred means of information available to women in Life Rehabilitation programme and Challenges faced by the women of Life Rehabilitation programmes in Niger State. Similarly, four research questions were set based on the objectives of the study. Related literatures were also reviewed. A survey design was adopted for the study this particular method was adopted because the research determines the opinion, attitude and behavior of the participants. Two instruments were used (questionnaire and interview). The research instrument was self-administered by the researcher and research assistant. Data was analyzed using simple percentages, mean and standard deviation. The Study revealed that the Programme has succeeded in empowering its beneficiaries by way of vocational skills acquisition hence contributing to a change in their socio-economic status in the State. Based on the findings, the study recommends among others the urgent need to monitor and supervise the existing Programmes. And that the Federal, State and Local Government should join hands together in making available funds for the trainees. And there is the need for Librarians to provide personalized services for this special group of Women. Government at all levels to encourage individuals, philanthropists and philanthropic organizations to set up poverty alleviation related NGOs to supplement the effort in fighting the scourge of poverty in Nigeria.

Introduction

Empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals, organization, or groups to make choice and to transform that choice into desire actions and outcomes (World Bank, 2011). Empowerment is giving power to an individual to enable him/her to be self-reliant. According to Lugman (2005) empowerment is the enhancement assets and capabilities of diverse individual and groups

to engage, influence and hold accountable the situation which affect them, most especially women. Women empowerment is one of the key factors in determining success of development because with the right information given at the right time can empower women and protect them from various problems.

In order to empower women, various governments put up life rehabilitation programmes.

These programmes include the Better Life for Rural Women was introduced in 1989 by Hajiya Maryam Babangida the former President of Nigeria, Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) introduced in 2000 by Hajiya Maryam Abacha the former wife of the late President, and Child Care Trust in 2008 by Stella Obasanjo and Women trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) was also set up by Titi Atiku Abubakar. Much later, Women and Youth Empowerment (WYE) was introduced by Mrs Turai YarAdua the wife of late President YarAdua, while Dame Patient Good Luck the wife of President Good Luck set up the Women for Change Initiative (WCI). Other programmes introduced during these periods were Fadama Programmes Sponsored by World Bank, Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS), You Win Programme and Sure-P Programme by the Government of President Good luck Jonathan.

The various state governments had also articulated blueprints on women

development, adopting the integrated rural development strategy as their strategic option to carry development to the masses. Examples are the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) by Hajiya Zainab Kure wife of former Niger State Governor and the Life Rehabilitation (Life Rehab) set up by Hajiya Jummai Aliyu Babangida. These projects have spanned over a decade with a lot of metamorphosis, but these programmes still have the same package for women in term of socio-economic and political advancement.

In Nigeria several programmes aimed at national development, poverty reduction, women empowerment among others were launched by successive presidents and their spouses since 1980's to oversee, organize and direct partnership with the people activities. Still Nigerian women were faced with multiple problems ranging from poverty, illiteracy, poor health facilities, collapse of infrastructure facilities and the problem of empowerment.

Statement of the Problem

Women are supposed to be empowered through the provision of information services. The information services will keep them abreast on how they are to rehabilitate themselves been supported by adequate infrastructure and

money. Despite the numerous support rendered towards the empowerment of women in Nigeria and the enormous contribution made by women, there still seems to be major challenges encountered by them such as geographical disparities, shortages in infrastructure, financial and human resources which can be attributed to lack of access to adequate information. Furthermore, low social and economic status of women, insufficient farming\agricultural materials and equipment are also issues that are affecting women can also be attributed to lack of adequate information.

However, the fact remains that a large number of women do not realize their potentials and cannot contribute to societal development because of lack of information that they can use in the area of vocational skills with which they can become economically independent. It is in view of the above that the researcher intends to investigate the vocational skills, means of communication and challenges faced by women participating in Life Rehabilitation Programme in Minna, Niger State.

Objectives of the Study

The general objectives of this research are to determine the role of life rehabilitation using information services for women

empowerment in Niger State, Nigeria. The Specific Objective was to;

1. Determine the socio-economic and political programmes available to women in Life Rehabilitation programme.
2. Find out the various vocational Skills the participants are exposed to by Life-Rehabilitation programme in Niger State.
3. Determine the prefer means of information available to women in Life Rehabilitation programme in Niger State.
4. Determine the challenges faced by the women participating in Life Rehabilitation programmes in Niger State.

Literature Review

More than half of the world's population is made up of women, yet women are often still in position of reduced power and their work within and outside home goes unrecognized. These women in most cases have been identified as the key agents of sustainable development and their empowerment is seen as central to more holistic approach toward establishing new pattern and processes of development that

are attainable as attested to by Handy and Kassam (2004).

Unfortunately Nigeria was ranked as the richest nation in the world in terms of crude oil, mineral resources, and agriculture products to mention but few. In spite of all these abundant resources, the quality of life especially of women has significantly been on the decline over the years (Mohammad, 2004).

This is why awe (1990) perceived the importance of women's role as managers of homes as the peace and stability at homes depends on homes depends on the managerial activities of the women. She stressed further that women, especially the mothers plan, organize, direct and coordinate all the resources of the home, both human and material, to the benefit of all the members of the family including their husbands.

In fact the empowerment of women differ globally, different country different empowerment programme, just like in India, for more than 100 years NGO's have been in different developmental programmes which focused on income generation, gender, micro credit and focused more on women in fact, about 32, 144 NGO's exist in India, gender relation at the household level and

strengthening women's economic empowerment. The overall goal was to contribute to poverty reduction and empowerment of women (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2007)

Trade at Hand is a partnership between the government of Liberia and Finland and the international Trade Centre (ITC). It gives market women access to more competitive pricing because they can access a larger pool of suppliers. The programme is part of an integrated approach to trade development, poverty reduction and women economic empowerment (Vienna, 2010). In Ethiopia, Amhara Women Entrepreneur Association (AWEA) is another programme with other 300 members. it support its members with business development, consultancy services and skill mentoring and technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of the women (Sida, 2010).

The situation is not better in Nigeria, inequality in the distribution of income and wealth widen social gaps between the poor and the rich. Consequently, unemployment, poverty, social insecurity, illiteracy, and health problems are very obvious in rural and urban areas (Aliyu, 2003). However, Nigeria is not left behind with programmes

like Women Non-Governmental Organization in Akwa Ibom (WNGOs) (Clark, 2004), Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC) in Enugu state. Youth Empowerment Programme and life Rehabilitation programme in Niger state, to mention but a few.

All the empowerment programmes are aimed at providing the women with opportunities for acquisition of vocational skills of various kinds which makes them not only-self-reliant but also empower them to be more efficient in the discharge of their responsibilities to their communities and Nigeria at large.

Methodology

The Survey research design was adopted for the study. This design was adopted because the research aimed to determine the opinion, attitude and behavior of the beneficiary and their instructors with respect to the poverty and the impact of NGOs at poverty alleviation. According to Ali (2006), survey research method is a type of descriptive research which uses sample data to describe and explain what is in existence or non-existent on the present status of a phenomenon being investigated. The target

population of the study comprised of all the 200 women who participant in Life Rehabilitation Programme of Niger State.

The sample for the study was 132 women, drawn purposively from the 200 women trained by the Life Rehab Programme. This size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size from a given population. Giving the homogeneous nature of the population, the frame of the population was divided into three strata of senatorial zones. In each stratum, a sample of individual elements was selected for fair representation of 50%, 30% and 20% based on the number of trainees.

The Questionnaires was used in collecting data. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The section A of the questionnaire was on the bio-data of the respondents; the section B was multiple choice items on the role of Life Rehabilitation using Information Services for Empowerment of Women in Life Rehabilitation in Niger State while the sections C were interview questions. Data collated was analyzed using simple percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Response Rate

A total of 132(100%) copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents, while a total of 101 (76%) copies were duly completed and returned. The high response rate was accomplished due to the fact that the researcher and the research assistant administered the questionnaires with due care and diligence.

Finding and Discussion

Data collected from the study are presented in the order of the research questions. Research question one sought to find out the socio-economic and political programmes available to women of Life Rehabilitation in Niger State

Table 1. Socio-Economic and Political Programmes Available to Life Rehabilitation Programme in Niger State.

| Various Skills Available in Life Rehabilitation Programmes in Niger State |
|--|
| Tailoring |
| Hair dressing |
| Computer training |
| Poultry farming |
| Soap making |
| Carpentry |
| Electrician |
| Tie and die |

Table 1 indicates that many Programmes were available to Women in Life Rehabilitation Programme in Niger State.

Table 2 Skills Available to Women in Life Rehabilitation Programme in Niger State.

| Various Skills Acquired | Frequency | % |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Tailoring | 20 | 20% |
| Hair dressing | 12 | 12% |
| Computer training | 20 | 20% |
| Poultry farming | 7 | 7% |
| Soap making | 12 | 12% |
| Carpentry | 12 | 12% |
| Electrician | 11 | 11% |
| Fish farming | 7 | 7% |
| Total | 101 | 100 |

Table 2 indicates that 20(20%) of the respondents had trained on tailoring and computer training which is the highest while the lowest percentage of the respondent were in poultry and fish farming. The table further reveals that the respondents were well distributed among the

various vocation skills available to them in Life Rehabilitation programme. This finding agrees with the findings of Ebele (2003) who opines that women are more evident in the informal sector, as petty traders, small scale farmers and house helps.

Table 3. Preferred Means of Information Available to Women in Life Rehabilitation Programme.

| Media of Communication | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Television | 20 | 20% |
| Radio | 25 | 25% |
| Bill board | 5 | 5% |
| News papers | 5 | 5% |
| Jingles | 2 | 2% |
| Posters | 2 | 2% |
| Mobile phone | 30 | 30% |
| Magazine | 3 | 3% |
| Video | 10 | 10% |
| Total | 101 | 100% |

From Table 3. it can be seen that, majority of the respondents ie 30(30%) indicated mobile phones as their most preferred means of communication in the respective communities, while only 2(2%) each indicated jingles and Posters, which were the lowest percentage of respondents. These findings agree with Lennie (2002) who conducted study on rural women’s empowerment in a communication technology project, the findings suggested Using communication and interaction strategies such as workshops, seminars, online groups, audio and videoconferences that enable the active participation of collaborating researchers, government and

industry partners. This can enable women to have a direct voice with people in strategic or policy-making positions, and thus facilitate political empowerment. This can enable women to have a direct voice with people in strategic or policy-making positions, and thus facilitate political empowerment. Such strategies can also provide decision-makers with a better understanding of rural women’s lives and issues. However, to be most effective, prior face-to-face contact between project participants and stakeholders is required and communication and information sharing needs to be personalized.

Table 4. Challenges to participant in Life Rehabilitation

The Challenges Face by the Women Participants is Summarized in Table 4.5.

| Challenges | Frequency | (%) |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Cost of transportation to the venue | 22 | 22 |
| Inadequate information | 25 | 24 |
| Inadequate training tools | 14 | 14 |
| Cooperation from the family members | 10 | 10 |
| Level of education | 30 | 30 |
| Total | 101 | 100 |

From Table 4. it can be seen that, majority of the respondents indicated that Cost of transportation to the venue, inadequate information, inadequate training tools, Cooperation from the family members and low level of education were the challenges faced by the women participating in the programmes. Only 20% of the respondents disagreed with the above assertion. This finding agrees with Ukwoma and Njoku (2013), their findings revealed some challenges faced by women empowerment programme as follows: Transportation difficulties, including bad roads, making it difficult for cooperative offices to visit the cooperative women often. Also the cooperative women found it difficult to transport their farm produce to the urban centers where they can be sold, Insufficient cooperative seminars and workshops being organized by the workers, lack of storage and processing facilities for the products harvested causes some of the produce to perish before they can be sold, Failure of government to fulfill most of their promises, turns the frustration and indignation of the women at the cooperative officers and They lack application of the acquired skills, most times after

receiving the lectures from the extension workers, they cannot put them into practice because the facilities are not available.

Discussion of Result

Based on the findings of this study, various economic programmes are available to the women participants of Life Rehabilitation in Niger State. And the participants of the empowerment programmes mostly acquired various skills such as Tailoring, Hair dressing, computer training and Poultry farming to mention but a few. The findings of Daniju (2007) revealed that the best option for empowerment is skills acquisitions as it will ensure financial independence and better stander of living. The findings also found that majority of the respondents used Television, Radio, Bill board, Newspapers, Jingles, Posters, Mobile phone, Magazines and Video as their means of communication.

The World Bank guidelines for Non-governmental Organizations suggested that NGOs should offer a variety of means of communicating in different media both within the community and with other stakeholders and interest groups. This would increase the base of information available to indigenous people and in return, the capacity

of indigenous people to share their knowledge will also increase.

The findings also reveals that the participant were faced with various challenges ranging from Cost of transportation to the venue, Inadequate information, Inadequate training tools, Cooperation from the family members and their level of education. But still the programme has impacted on the participants most especially in the following areas Improvement of literacy level, Improvement of girl-child enrolment and retention in school, Improvement of the health and nutritional status of women and children, Entrepreneurial skills development, Gender sensitive, sustainable environmental practice, Active women participation in governance and reduction in the prevalence of HIV and AIDS infections, malaria and other diseases.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that the Non-Governmental Organizations play an increasing role in poverty alleviation. They played a major role in promoting human oriented development that is they bridge the gap between the government and its communities. They are very essentials in

organizing poor people, fighting for their right and empowering them through their empowerment programmes. This is evidenced from the success story of Life Rehabilitation as the findings reveals that the program has contributed to the economic upliftment of the women through the provision of vocational skills.

The government, leaders, politicians, donor, and the well to do in our communities, society and nation in general should support these organizations so as to expand their scope.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The federal, state and local government should join hands together in making available funds for trainees to be able to set themselves up after acquiring necessary such skills.
2. Although many programmes exist in life Rehabilitation in Niger State for the purpose of empowering women, there is the need to monitor and supervised the existing once.
3. Skills acquisitions contribute significantly to the society in term of reduction, elimination of joblessness,

advancement of knowledge, technological development, and reduction in crime, and poverty. Many governments are still finding it difficult to provide jobs for the citizens because the citizens are lacking important skills they need. There will be a lot of jobs generated for the citizens of every country if the citizens are well equipped with skills.

4. Collaborations with television, radio houses on women empowerment programme would yield better result for the NGOs in providing information to the women development should be given utmost priority with emphasis on agricultural development, Technology, and skill acquisition, in addition, partnership with public and private sectors will be an important approach

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