



The Impact of Women Empowerment Programme on Poverty Reduction in Bauchi State- Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper analyzed the Impact of Woman Empowerment Programme on Poverty Reduction in Bauchi State, Nigeria. The study relied on primary data, a total of 540 questionnaires was administered out of which 510 was returned and analyzed. An in-depth interview (IDI) which involved 15 men and 15 women, was also conducted to complement the survey instrument (questionnaire). Empirical and theoretical literature were reviewed, questionnaire and in-depth interview were used for data collection and the data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, the variables used are marital status, level of income and level of education. With regard to the findings of the study, evidence from data analyses show that the results of the study are supportive of the major assumptions made at the beginning of the study and also support some of the literature that were reviewed. The results of the study show that the higher the level of women empowerment, the lower the level of poverty in the state. The study concludes that women empowerment creates powerful influence on community, family and nation at large, it also revealed that income and education level have significant relationship with poverty reduction. The study recommends re-orientation of men's mind set on women's empowerment and participation could greatly enhance women's empowerment, also the empowering agents (Government, Non- Governmental Organisations, individuals) should create necessary awareness on the availability of the existing empowerment initiative so that women can take advantage of their initiatives to empower themselves.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Programme, Poverty Reduction.

JEL Codes: 138, B54

1. Introduction

Providing equal access to financial services, helping give women more power over income and assets like land and technology, and professionalizing the care giving-giving sector can help accelerate progress in women's economic empowerment, especially in developing countries (World Bank, Washington, June 26th, 2017). Time poverty for women is exacerbated then when there is a lack of infrastructure and technology that can provide basic necessity such as safe water, cooking fuel, labour-saving technologies, transportation as well as access to social and economic amenities such as markets, schools and health centres (USAID, 2015). Globally, it is not uncommon to hear of the need for women's participation towards sustainable economic development. For the past decade, the issue of women empowerment has moved to the forefront of international and national debates with

the United Nations (UN) and other several international bodies calling for greater equality and opportunities for women (Population Reference Bureau, 2002). Women contribute substantially to the economic survival of their country's economy and to their households in particular. In most developing countries women are responsible for the day to day well-being of their families. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) "Societies cannot afford to ignore the potentials of female labour in reducing poverty and the need to search for innovative ways of lowering economic, social and political barriers. Society's ability to accept new economic roles for women and the economy's ability to create decent jobs to accommodate them are the key prerequisites to improving labour market outcomes for women as well as for economic development as a whole (ILO, 2008)".

Therefore, there has been an increase in World Bank activities on gender issues concerning women empowerment. In 1991, the Bank committed about a third of all its investment projects on measures dealing with women issues (Murphy, 1995). Throughout Africa, women form part of the powerful force for growth and development by making enormous contributions to the economy as workers and entrepreneurs and to the welfare of their families (Ellis et al., 2007). Realising these important roles of women, the World Bank therefore, sponsored gender and economic roles studies in Uganda (2006), Tanzania (2007), and Kenya (2007) to assess the level of women incorporation into the economic spheres. Other agencies such as the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like World Vision International (WVI), Gender Activists, among others have all been advocating for the need to empower women to contribute towards economic development and the reduction of household poverty. Governments of various nations in which Nigeria and Bauchi state are inclusive, have made attempts to empower women to contribute economically to the growth of society and reduction of poverty. A nations population is usually almost divided between males and females excepts under peculiar circumstances such as war or highly selective immigration which normally affect males more than the females.

Though, there has been considerable progress in developing the capabilities of women, their participation in economic and political decision making remains very limited. The United Nations Development Programme (UNPD) in its Human Development Reports in 2005 listed some examples to show that inspite of the considerable progress in developing women's capabilities, women and men still live in an unequal world. Meanwhile, organization such as Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Women for Democracy and Leadership (WODE) and National Council for Women (NCW) were formed to sensitize women.

Problem Statement

Women most often face discrimination and persistent gender inequalities, while some women are experiencing multiple discrimination and exclusion because of factors such as ethnicity or caste. Unequal opportunities between women and

men continue to hamper women's ability to lift themselves from poverty, and gain more options to improve their living standards. The discriminatory practices and stereotypical attitudes prevent women in some parts of Nigeria women are unable to obtain business loans without their husbands or father's co-signature and support. In many societies, existing norms dictate that girls and women have the main responsibility for the care of children, the elderly and the sick, as well as for running the household, including the provision of water and energy supplies. Many programmes have been put in place at local, state, national and international levels. These programmes and initiatives aim at widening women's access to education, encouraging women's full participation in cash economy and politics and reviewing laws on status of women. These initiatives are organized by both women themselves and governmental and non-governmental organizations and include the provision of micro-credit facilities, educational programmes, skill acquisition, political participation, and related activities. These programmes are evident in Bauchi.

Though some of these empowerment initiatives exist, the effectiveness of these initiatives in poverty reduction of Bauchi women has not been empirically examined and documented. This dearth of research has created the need for this study. This research therefore assessed the empowerment initiatives available to women in Bauchi and evaluate the role of these initiatives in reducing the poverty and identify the factors that limit empowerment.

Objectives of the Study

The general objectives is to access the impact of women empowerment on poverty reduction in Bauchi state, and specific objectives are:

- i. To ascertain the contribution of economic empowerment of women to poverty reduction in Bauchi state.
- ii. To identify factors responsible for women's poverty in the society.
- iii. To make policy recommendation best on the findings of the research on how the women empowerment reduces poverty in Bauchi State.

This paper will also serve as a guide to women organization such as National Council for Women Societies (NCWS) Family Support Programme (FSP) Women for Democracy and Leadership

(WODEL) etc in reviving the status of womanhood. Poverty is a general phenomenon in the world. But this paper is limited to the empowerment of women in order to reduce poverty with particular reference to Bauchi State.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Owing productive resources has been found to strengthen a woman's bargaining position in the household (Meier Zu Selhausen, 2016). Solomon (1976) defined empowerment as a process whereby individuals are made to engage in activities that aim at reducing the powerlessness that has been created through negative valuation based on membership in a stigmatized group. This theory is very important to this study because women as a group have been marginalized and are a stigmatized group in the society.

Women empowerment According to Stromquist (1995), women empowerment is a socio-political concept that involves cognitive, psychological, economic and political dimensions. The cognitive component involves women's understanding of the causes of their subordination and marginalization and appreciating the need to make choices that may go against cultural or social expectations. The psychological component refers to women's belief and confidence that they can improve their condition through personal and collective effort. The economic component refers to access to income outside home through work that provides income independence. The political component involves the ability to understand one's situation and mobilize for change.

Poverty: according to United Nations Development Program, around 2.7 billion people are considered to be living in poverty. These people have a consumption level of less than 2 US Dollars per day. Extreme poverty is defined as living in less than 1 US Dollar per day. Around 1.1 billion of the poor live in extreme poverty. *Poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon related to the inadequacy or lack of social, economic, cultural, and political entitlements. Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not being able to go to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future and living a day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by*

unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom (World Bank, 2000).

Women's economic empowerment is recognized as one means for reducing poverty and economic growth. Women play a significant role in Nigerian economy, and are highly visible in the micro and small enterprises sub-sector. The majority of them are engaged in small income generating self-employment in agriculture and non-agricultural activities with low prospect for growth (Dejene, 2014).

Zoellick, (2010) commenting on the Brazil's economy asserts that the likelihood of a child's survival increased by 20% when the mother controlled household income. Increasing the role of women in the economy is part of the solution to the financial and economic crises that are critical for economic resilience and growth. Higher female financial earnings and bargaining power translate into greater investment in children's education, health and nutrition, which leads to economic growth in the long term (DFID, 2010). Economic empowerment also contributes to the reduction of gender-based violence, increases women's family-planning possibilities and slows the spread of HIV.

Theoretical and Empirical Framework

Classical theory, attention was concentrated on the aggregate distribution of profits, rent and wages. Ricardo, for example, described the principal problem of political economy as the division of the earth's produce „among three classes, namely; the proprietor of the land, the owner of the stock or capital necessary for its cultivation, and the labourers by whose industry it is cultivate“. Little or no attention was devoted to the explanation of the distribution of personal incomes and the relationship between personal incomes and aggregate shares of profits, rents and wages. However classical economists that came later began to give increasing attention to inequality in the distribution of earnings and then what happens to factors affecting individual earnings rather than family incomes in explaining inequality. This theory underpins the study.

Owing productive resources has been found to strengthen a woman's bargaining position in the household (Meier Zu Selhausen, 2016). Several studies including Batliwala (1994); Acharya and Bennett (1983) Kabeer (2001); and Frankenberg and Thomas (2001) have identified some determinants

of women empowerment. A study in rural Zimbabwe by Batliwala (1994) found that among the factors that increase the likelihood of women using contraception and accessing anti-natal care both of which reduces maternal mortality-were education and paid work. The analysis of the finding shows that women with low level of education were less likely to visit anti-natal facilities. A similar study was conducted by the international development research (2006) in rural Nigeria. The findings showed that 96% of those with secondary and higher education, 53% of those with primary education and 47% of those with little or no education had sought postnatal care in the two years before the study. A study in India found that better educated women score higher than less educated women on composite index measuring their access to control over resources as well as their role in economic decision making.

Another study undertaken in Bangladesh found that with rising unemployment, many women become primary bread winners, slightly altering the balance of power between the genders. Similarly, a detailed study of women engaged in industrial home work in Mexico City noted that, particularly in household survival, women had been able to negotiate a greater degree of respect. Studies of micro credit in rural Bangladesh, by Zaman (1999), found that women's access to credit led to a number of changes in women's own perception of themselves and their role in household decision-making. It was found to have positive impact on women's assets as well as led to a long-term reduction in domestic violence.

Similar work by Amin and Pebbly (1994) measures the impact of programme participation on identified women status indicators in Bangladesh. They obtained qualitative information by means of focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews and applied multiple logistic regressions to estimate the impact of group membership and programme effects. The indicators used to see the influence of credit to women include control over part of household's cash earnings participation in household's decision-making.

3. Methodology

The research adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The survey research method according to Stark (2004) has two identifying features. First, it is

based on a sample of the population. Second, the data are collected by personal interviews or by having each individual complete a questionnaire. The researcher obtained cross sectional data from the respondents by means of questionnaire and In – Depth Interviews (IDIs).

The study was carried out in Bauchi, a city in northeastern Nigeria, the capital of Bauchi State, of the Bauchi Local Government Area within that State, and of the traditional Bauchi Emirate. It is located on the northern edge of the Jos Plateau, at an elevation of 616 m. The Bauchi state covers an area of 49,119 km² and had a population of 4,653,066 at the time of the 2006 Census. Bauchi state is bounded by Gombe state, Yobe state, & Jigawa state. Most of the women rely on petty trading for their daily upkeep. The population of the study comprised of adult males and females in Bauchi state from the age of 18 and above. The sample was drawn from three senatorial zones (Bauchi South, Bauchi north and Bauchi central). The population of Bauchi state women is estimated at 2,460,392, while the total population is estimated at 4,653,066 (National Population Commission, 2006). The sample that chosen for the study. Fifteen local government were selected from Bauchi state. Bauchi south, Bauchi North and Bauchi central 5 LGAs were were selected in each zone. In each of the local government selected, 34 women were selected. Making a total of 510 women for the questionnaire survey. Considering the nature of the present study, Men were included in the In-Depth Interview survey. This is to enable the researcher obtain the views of men on the issues in the study. Thus, five men and five women were selected from each zone making 15 men and 15 women, a total of 30 people for the In-depth Interview. This gave at total of 540 respondents for the study.

Multi stage sampling technique was used to select the sample. These include cluster sampling, simple random sampling, and availability sampling. Purposive sampling was also used in the sampling procedure. All the areas in Bauchi state were grouped into three clusters, representing the Bauchi state. After grouping them into clusters, the researcher conducted a simple random sampling (balloting) to select the fifteen local government to be studied in Bauchi state. In the 15 selected local government, the houses were numbered and another simple random sampling was conducted to enable the researcher select the households that will

represent the local government. Ten (17) households were selected in each of the local government and in each household two women were picked for the study. The reason for choosing random sampling for this study is to ensure that all the local government in Bauchi state were equally represented and also to give every local government an equal chance of being selected for the study in order to reduce biases (Stark, 2004). There were cases where there was only one woman who was up to 18 years in the household selected. In cases like this, what the researcher did was to select another woman from another household which did not fall into the sample to make up the number required. Purposive sampling procedure was also used to select 15 men and 15 women who are opinion leaders, women leaders and the significant others in the areas. Who have certain qualities and can provide information on the subject area. These are the people who were studied using in depth interviews. Questionnaire the copies of the questionnaire were administered to 540 women aged 18 and above in Bauchi state surveyed. The In-depth Interview guide was used to obtain data from the purposively selected 30 men and 45 women who are opinion leaders, women leaders, and the significant others in Bauchi state. Data collected with the instrument were edited to ensure accuracy. The quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Statistical means such as percentages, bar chart, pie chart and frequency tables were used to reduce the raw data into manageable proportions. Analysis of qualitative data was done using notes taken during the interviews and transcription from

tapes recorded during the interviews. The tapes were transcribed verbatim. Those recorded in local dialect were translated into English language. Key points were identified and were categorized and coded, reflecting the various themes in the study. The results were then analyzed according to the themes in the study. Statements with contextual importance or connotations were extracted as illustrative quotes to complement the quantitative data.

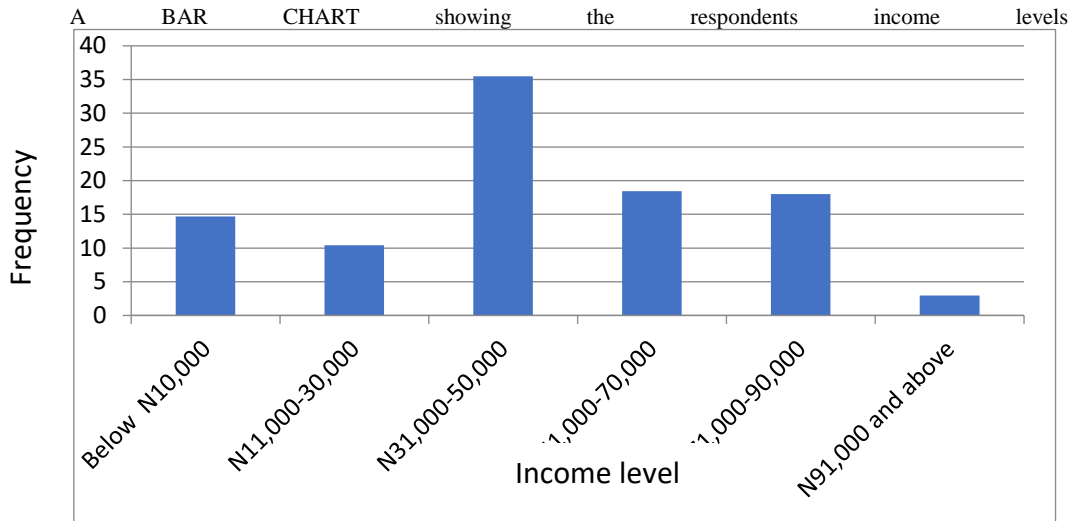
4. Discussion of Results

Demographic Characteristics of Questionnaire respondents

Marital Status: the study shows that majority of the women who participated in the study were married representing 79.80% of the sample. Out of the 510 participants, 57 (11.18%) were single, 34 (6.67%) were widows while 12 (2.35%) were divorced or separated.

With regard to the participants' ages, 106 (20.78%) of the respondents fall between the age bracket of 18 and 27, while 139 (27.25%) are between the ages of 28 and 37. One hundred and forty two (27.84%) were in the 38-47 age bracket, 103 (20.19%) were between the ages of 48 and 57 while 20 (3.92%) are 58 years and above.

The educational qualification shows, 75 (14.7%) of the respondents had no formal education, 33 (6.5%) had first leaving certificate, 201 (39.4%) had secondary school certificate, and 90 had Ordinary National Diploma (OND) or National Certificate in Education (NCE), 92 (18%) had university degree or Higher National Diploma (HND), while 19 of the participants had higher degrees.



Source: researcher's field survey (2017)

Respondents indications of existence of Empowerment Initiatives in Bauchi State.

In responding to the question: Are there empowerment initiatives for women in Bauchi State? All the participants agreed that there is one form of empowerment initiative or the other in their local government. With regard to the results of the IDIs, all the respondents who were interviewed also agree that there exist some empowerment initiatives in Bauchi State.

Respondents frequency report on the availability of empowerment initiatives available for women in Bauchi state. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate the availability of several empowerment initiatives for Bauchi state women. The respondents were asked to tick as many as possible, the initiatives they have benefited from. The results of their responses as indicated, shows that the most available initiative in the town is the existence of women organizations with 403 participants indicating their availability. Frequency of the respondents on the availability of other initiatives follows in this order: cooperative societies, right to use land and other cash crops, provision of agricultural facilities, micro credit programme, awareness programme, adult literacy programme, child day care services, political parties, access to skill and capacity building centres, and the

last in the list based on frequency is free education. All the interviewees also indicated that the above listed empowerment initiatives are available. The initiatives that the women have benefited from are further explained.

Participants' responses on who organizes the empowerment initiatives

Participants' responses on who organizes the empowerment initiatives. 215 (42.16%) respondents indicated that the initiatives are organized by governmental bodies, 37.06% (189 respondents) indicated that initiatives are organized by non-governmental organizations while 106 (20.78%) indicated that they are organized by individuals.

Majority of the participants who were interviewed agreed that some of the empowerment initiatives were organized by the government, others were organized by non-governmental organizations while others are organized by individuals. According to one of the IDI respondents: "Some initiatives like provision of agricultural facilities, adult literacy programme, free education, micro-credit programme are organized or facilitated by the government while others like cooperative society, women's community organizations, skill and capacity building centres, child day care services are organized mainly by non-governmental organizations and women themselves. (IDI

Respondent: Women Leader in Das LGA; 52 yrs). Another participant said: "Some women are given right to use land and cash crops for agricultural purposes on temporary basis by an individual or a particular family. Some individuals also lend credit to women. This means that individuals also provide credit facilities". (IDI Respondent: Opinion Leader, Toro LGA; 54 yrs).

Respondents' rating of women's involvement in empowerment initiatives in Bauchi State

448 (87.84%) of the respondents rated women's involvement in the empowerment initiative low while 62 (12.16%) rated women's involvement high. Also, all the IDI participants agreed that women's involvement in empowerment initiatives in Bauchi is low. Reasons given by the respondents for this low involvement is: *Respondents' indications of major causes of women's low involvement in empowerment initiatives*

With regard to the reasons for the low involvement of women in existing empowerment initiatives, 429 respondents rated ignorance of the existence of the initiatives (429 respondents) as the major reason. This was followed by restrictions from husbands and other relations (236 respondents indicated this as a major reason). (236) respondents indicated that lack of interest on the part of women was the major reason for such low involvement while 98 respondents attributed low involvement to women's lack of willingness to take advantage of the empowerment initiatives.

Most of the women respondents in the IDI indicated that restriction from husbands and other relations; and women's lack of will power to take advantage of the initiatives were the major reasons for women's low involvement in these initiatives. Few other women and majority of the men were of the view that some women are ignorant of the existence of the initiatives while some of the respondents indicated that some women do not have interest in taking advantage of the existing initiatives. According to a participant: "I know that banks give loans to women, but I am not a salaried worker and I have nothing to use as collateral for the banks to give me a loan and because of that, I have never secured any bank loan". (IDI Respondent: Leader of a wives association in Kirfi LGA 63 years). Another IDI respondent said: "I have asked many of my friends who didn't have the opportunity to attend schools to

start attending adult literacy programmes in the place where I teach but they refused saying that their husbands said they shouldn't start because they are not going to do anything with the education at their age". IDI Respondent: A teacher in Adult Literacy Programme at Bauchi LGA; 45 yrs). This achieve the objective of the factors responsible for women's poverty in Bauchi state.

Participants' responses on how they have been economically empowered

With regard to the level of economic empowerment of the respondents, 369 of the participants indicated that they have access to land and cash crops, 354 indicated that they have been involved in cooperative societies, while 180 indicated that they have been provided with agricultural production facilities. Among the 510 participants surveyed, 162 indicated that they have access to micro credit facilities while 56 indicated that they have benefited from skill/technical training.

Majority of the IDI participants indicated that most women in Bauchi have been empowered through access to land and cash crops and involvement in production activities. They also indicated that only women who are salaried workers and women who have the opportunity to borrow from individuals that usually take advantage of micro credit facilities. Quotes on the economic empowerment initiatives that have benefited women as expressed by the IDI respondents are as follows: "Majority of women in this LGA have made a lot of money from the cultivation and egg selling." IDI respondent: opinion leader in Zaki LGA; 57 yrs).

"Majority of women belong to corporative societies and through that they have benefited from government subsidized agricultural facilities such as fertilizers and herbicides". (IDI participant, Opinion Leader, in Zaki LGA: 62 years).

Participants' responses on categories of women who benefit most from these empowerment initiatives

With regard to the categories of women who benefit most from the empowerment initiatives, shows that 242 (47.45%) indicated that women who are related to individuals occupying political offices are the major beneficiaries of the empowerment initiatives, 110 (21.57%) indicated that women leaders benefit most, 81 (15.88%) respondents indicated that women who are civil servants benefit most while 77 (15.10%) respondents listed poor village women as

the major beneficiaries. There were slight differences in the response of IDI participants as majority of the participants indicated that women leaders and civil servants benefit more from the initiatives than other women. According to an IDI participant: "Women

who are civil servants benefit more from micro credit programme because they use their salary as collateral. (IDI respondent, civil servant, Bauchi LGA 49 years).

4.1 Table 1 showing participants' level of participation in economic development activities

	Very Great extent	Great extent	Little extent	Not at all	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
Getting involved in Agricultural production activities	1112	486	98	21	1693	3.32	1 st
Giving technical/skill training to people	84	129	142	375	730	1.43	3 rd
Giving people loan to start up their business	48	120	138	389	695	1.36	5 th
Setting up business to employ others	160	222	216	288	886	1.74	2 nd
Creating awareness on the availability of micro credit facilities	56	183	154	358	751	1.47	4 th

Source: Researcher's field survey (2017)

The results in Table 1 above show that the economic development activity that the respondents have participated most is getting involved in agricultural production activities. This is followed by setting up of business to employ others, and giving technical and skill training to people. The least economic activity that the respondents have participated in is giving people loan to start their businesses.

With regard to the responses of the IDI participants, majority of the participants indicated that Bauchi women have been actively involved in agricultural production activities. LGAs that the respondents indicated that women have been actively involved include cultivation, egg, poultry farming, and other food processing activities such as groundnut oil processing.

Participants' responses on if women's level of participation in development processes is low

4.2 Table 2 showing frequency of participants' responses on the factors that have contributed to low empowerment and participation of Bauchi State women in development process

Militating Factors	Frequency	Rank
Lack of time due to domestic and reproductive role of women	427	1
Discriminatory attitude of men	408	2
Illiteracy	331	3
Poor economic base	313	4
Lack of group coalition among women	296	5
Patriarchy	252	6
Lack of efficient and trustworthy women leaders	204	7

participants' responses on successful empowerment of women in the community. Out of the 510 respondents 326 (63.92%) stated that women have not been successfully empowered while 184 (36.08%) indicated that women have been successfully empowered. All the IDI participants agreed that women have not been successfully empowered and this has led to their low participation in development process.

The result in Table 2 above shows the frequencies of the participants' responses on the factors that limits women's participation in development processes in Bauchi State.

Among the major problems indicated by the participants is lack of time due to domestic and reproductive roles of women (427). This was followed by the discriminatory attitude of men (408).

Militating Factors	Frequency	Rank
Lack of sustained process of empowerment	167	8
Religious belief	64	10
Lack of assertiveness among women	12	11

Source: Researcher's field survey(2017)

Out of the 510 women surveyed, 331 indicated that illiteracy is a major limiting factor while 313 listed poor economic base of women as a major factor. Other limiting factors listed in order of ranking by the participants include, lack of group coalition among women, patriarchy, lack of efficient and trustworthy women leaders, lack of sustained process of empowerment, rivalry among women, religious belief, and lack of assertiveness among women. The IDI participants further indicated that women's low level of participation could be attributed to poor economic base, burden of domestic and reproductive roles of women and illiteracy. Majority of the female respondents in the IDI also included discriminatory attitude of men as a contributing to low level of participation of women in development processes.

The result illustrates the importance of women empowerment on poverty reduction. This is consistent with Rahman and Naoroze (2007) findings that economic independence makes women to become self-reliant and this led to the reduction of poverty.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Women can be described as an indispensable group in the development of any nation. Women's empowerment creates a powerful influence on community, family and the nation at large. Thus, women empowerment can be seen as a vital strategy for any eradication of poverty. Although some initiatives have been established by government, nongovernmental bodies and individual, some factors have constituted constraints to women's involvement in these initiatives. Ignorance of the existence of these initiatives, lack of interest among women and restriction from husbands and other males have denied women access to these initiatives. The study revealed that income level and educational level have significant relationships with poverty reduction. This supports the view of Lasiele (1999) that preference to boy child education has led to low educational empowerment of women which has led to their poor participation in development process. Thus, to help reducing poverty in Bauchi

state, they should be empowered women economically. The study also reveals that women's participation in development is still low. There is need for government, non-governmental bodies and individuals to work hand in hand in eliminating or reducing these constraints in order to create a conducive environment for women to actively participate in the development process in order to reduce poverty. This will lead to sustainable development in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

The National gender policy should be enacted into laws to provide a legal framework for gender mainstreaming in the national development plans and strategies.

There should be coalition among women organizations and groups. This will help them share experiences and be able to tackle problems facing women. Women groups could be used as an effective mechanism for information dissemination, social and mutual learning, institutionalized process for capacity building and empowerment.

Re-orientation of men's mind set on women's empowerment and participation could greatly enhance women's empowerment. This could be achieved through seminars, training and workshops. Women should be given unlimited access to education and media. Through these, women will come to realize the scopes and opportunities through which they can improve their status in the society.

The empowering agents (e.g. governments, non-governmental bodies, individuals) should create necessary awareness on the availability of the existing empowerment initiatives so that women can take advantage of these initiatives to empower themselves.

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