

# Impact of Poverty Alleviation Programmes on Indigenous Women's Economic Empowerment in Nigeria: Evidence From Port Harcourt Metropolis

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## Abstract

This study was designed to assess the impact of participation of Port Harcourt indigenous women in poverty eradication programmes in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study used a questionnaire to elicit responses from 385 indigenous women who were randomly selected through a multi-stage technique from the study area. Descriptive statistics and t-tests were used to analyse the data collected. Results showed that majority (58.3 per cent) of the women were members of a cooperative society, 63.5 per cent were members of a community based organization (CBO), while 60.9 per cent were member of "Esusu" (rotatory credit schemes). The result further showed that 66.3 per cent of the women had engaged in jobs aimed at poverty alleviation. Only 6.0 per cent identified that they were not member of any poverty alleviation programmes (PAP) by government. It was found that after joining the PAP, 75.5 per cent of them experienced an increase in income of 36.6 per cent. The hypothesis test indicated that statistically significant differences existed in the income of the women from various sources of the economic undertakings after joining poverty alleviation programmes. It was therefore recommended that more programmes designed at alleviating poverty in Rivers State should target indigenous women. In addition to this, the study also recommended the establishment of entrepreneurship capacity-building programmes to enable the women to bring out their optimal input while participating in the poverty eradication programmes.

## Author's Note

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**Keywords:** Indigenous, Nigeria, poverty, women.

## 1. Introduction

Poverty is one of the most prevailing problems facing humanity, being a major obstacle to the realization of human rights and sustainable development. The Human Development Report (2002) placed the number of people living on less than a dollar a day in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) at 46.7 per cent. The poverty trend in Nigeria, an SSA country, as shown by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS, 2009), showed that the incidence of poverty increased from 28.1 per cent in 1995-2000 to 42.7 per cent in 2002, increased to 65.6 per cent in 2005, and to 70.2 per cent in 2009. According to the report, about 70 per cent of the Nigerian population live below the poverty line. A report from the World Bank's (2010) Human Development Report ranked Nigeria at 142 in the Human Development Index (HDI), thus grouped as one of the countries referred to, by the report, as having "low human development." The report, which was based on 2000-2008, indicated that the proportion of the population living below the income poverty line (i.e. those with purchasing power parity, or PPP, of \$1.25 a day) stood at 64.4%—a very high figure.

Global efforts to tackle poverty and gender discrimination appeared not to be yielding positive results. World Bank (2001), indicated that about 70 per cent of the 1.3 billion people living on less than \$1 a day are women. According to the African Development Bank (ADB, 2010) world leaders agreed to a set of time bounds and measurable goals and targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women at the United Nations Millennium Summit. The World Bank (2001) stated that poverty stems from a situation where gross inequality in the ownership of assets persists because of vested interests and entrenched power structures. Economists like Jeffrey Sachs (World Bank 2001) see improvements in property rights as being instrumental to poverty alleviation. This underscores the reason for increased attention to poverty eradication globally, namely the launching of several poverty alleviation programmes which were also aimed at actualizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of reducing hunger and poverty by half globally by 2015. Unfortunately, 2015 is now here yet poverty in the world and Nigeria is far from being eradicated.

Women's participation in development in Africa and other developing economies (a situation that could have improved the poverty situation of women) has been rated low (The United Nations Development Program, UNDP, 2003). This low participation has also been blamed for the less satisfactory impact of public investment in development. The women plan and act together for the satisfaction of their felt needs. This is a process where the women assist themselves through organized effort to acquire the attitudes, skills, and concepts required for their effective participation in programmes designed to promote their wellbeing. This low participation has also been blamed for the less than satisfactory impact of public investment in development (Iheduru, 2002). According to Maduagwu (2007) and Ketepa-Kalala (2001), the Beijing Conference declared that about 70 per cent of women live in unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in developing countries (which includes Nigeria). In Nigeria, there are several poverty alleviation programmes, some operating under the auspices of the government authorities such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), while others

operate under the tutelage of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and even cooperative bodies among rural and indigenous peoples whose livelihood activities have commonalities.

To eradicate poverty in Nigeria and achieve sustainable development, women must participate fully and equally in the formulation of developmental policies. The eradication of poverty cannot be accomplished through anti-poverty programmes alone but will require democratic participation and changes in economic structures that will allow indigenous women to resource opportunities and public services (Garuba, 2004). Unfortunately, research into how the orchestrated poverty alleviation programmes (PAP) affect indigenous women in Nigeria and even globally appear very scant, if available. There is a huge need for more research into this important area to provide current and reliable indices for informed policy making about ways of transforming the economic wellbeing of indigenous women in developing economies as Nigeria, hence the need for this research. Findings from such studies have the potential to promote useful policies and scalable models for eradicating poverty in other developing countries.

### **1.1 Objectives of the Study**

Based on the aforementioned, this study was designed with the aim of assessing the impact of poverty eradication programmes on the economic wellbeing or livelihoods of indigenous women in Port Harcourt metropolis, Nigeria. Specifically, the study's purpose was to : 1.) identify the level of participation of indigenous women in poverty alleviation programmes in the study area; and 2.) assess the impact of participation in poverty alleviation programmes on selected economic empowerment indices among Port Harcourt metropolis indigenous women.

### **1.2 Literature Review and Theoretical Issues**

The problem of poverty is intertwined with gender issues. The International Fund for Agricultural Development, IFAD (1997) noted that women represent the majority of the rural poor (up to 70%), especially where migration, marital instability, male mortality, and single parenthood have left them as heads of households. Women carry most of the responsibilities for household food security; women have indigenous technical knowledge, skills and motivation, and tend to remain on the margin, without access to critical resources. IFAD (1997) observed that rural poverty is associated with lack of access to productive resources, especially land. The poorest men and women in general have little or no land, yet socio-economic structures further reduce or inhibit access to land by women. Cultural traditions also inhibit women's access to other productive resources and services. Lack of education, especially among women, is correlated with high birth rates; the resulting population pressure contributes to environmental degradation, increasingly in the form of marginal land coming under cultivation; environmental degradation is characterized by soil erosion, declining yields, and even declining agricultural productivity. This leads to further expansion and migration, which increases the burden on those family members remaining as survivors. At times, the

poverty condition requires that even young children work in subsistence activities. This, alongside the lack of resources to pay school fees, prevents children, especially, from attending schools. Illiteracy prevents poor people from learning new skills and accessing information and services. Women in particular work long hours and have difficulty allotting time to rural development programmes.

A human-centred approach to development would entail a process of social change in which the women themselves have an opportunity to take part in making decisions that affect their lives (Etuk and Okwudishu, 2002). It is the women themselves who bring about poverty reduction; there can be no change for the better without their informed participation, i.e. without mobilizing their capabilities and energies and without increasing their knowledge and skills. As a result, the degree of poverty reduction in the 21st century should not be measured in terms of economic growth alone but must be seen from the point of general welfare of human beings. Etuk and Okwudishu (2002), argued that poverty reduction is used today especially in political and economic discourses to mean a change from a less desirable to a more desirable condition characterized by economic productivity, a high standard of living, technological advancement, a stable political order, the presence of basic human needs such as food, water, clothing, shelter, and a high literacy and educational level.

The eradication of poverty cannot be accomplished through anti-poverty programmes alone but will require democratic participation and changes in economic structures, which would allow indigenous women access to resource opportunities and public services (Garuba, 2004). Level of participation is a process of acting together with different interest, deciding together what is best, and forming a partnership to carry something out. Supporting independent community initiatives, i.e. helping others do what they want and perhaps within a framework of grants, advice, and support provided by the resource holder, is intended to achieve more than otherwise. According to Maduagwu (2007), the participation of women in poverty alleviation programmes has helped to grow increasingly competent for enacting co-operative solutions for their families. It helps them not only become more effective in their participation in solving the problems of their families, but also aids them in developing the skills for understanding the relative importance of problems and selecting appropriate options to address them. This enables women to take up the opportunity to identify their poverty levels, deal with them, and learn from their problems.

Indigenous people are persons, communities, and nations which claim a historical continuity and cultural affinity with societies endemic to their original territories that developed prior to exposure to western culture. The Ikwerres are the indigenous communities whose home lands are in the Niger Delta region, and of which 60 per cent of their tribal lands have been acquired for public development, resulting in the destruction of several of their villages and desecration of many of their sacred sites and burial grounds. The Ikwerres are the real inhabitants of Port Harcourt City, the capital of Rivers State, and also the oil hub of Nigeria.

## **2. Research Methods**

### **2.1 Area of Study**

The study was carried out in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State Nigeria. Port Harcourt is the capital city of Rivers State and also the headquarters of the Port Harcourt Local Government Area. It lies alongside the Bonny River and the Atlantic Ocean, and is located within the Niger Delta. The population of the city as of 2006 was 2,660,435 (National Population Commission, NPC, 2006). The ethnic groups are Ikwerre, Ijaw, and others. The population of the indigenous women was 11,970 (NPC, 2006) in nine communities of the city. The Ikwerres are the real inhabitants of Port Harcourt City, the capital of Rivers State, Nigeria. The present day location was inhabited only by the minority Ikwerre ethnic group, but today Port Harcourt is a metropolitan city of over a million people made up of Ikwerre indigenes and those from other parts of Nigeria, as well as a significant number of foreign nations who work in the petroleum and allied industries (Ihemere, 2003). The communities of Port Harcourt Local Government Area (PHALGA) are Nkpogu, Rumuwoji, Rumukalagbor, Elakahia, Rebisi, Nkpolu-Oroworokwo, Orogbum, Ohamini, and Ogbunabali.

### **2.2 Data Collection Procedure**

The study, a survey in design, was carried out in 2012. Primary and secondary data were used for the study. Secondary data sources were from journals, textbooks, institutional research reports, as well as online resources. Primary data were obtained through a set of structured questionnaires and interview schedules administered to indigenous women in the study area. A multi-stage random sampling technique was applied to select a total of 385 indigenous women from the study area. First, 5 out of the 9 communities in Port Harcourt, LGA were randomly chosen. Then, a list of indigenous women operating in different Poverty Alleviation programmes was obtained from the Ministry of Women Affairs in the state. From this list, 77 indigenous women were randomly chosen in equal proportion from the five communities sampled for the study. The women, however, cut across various entrepreneurial segments and poverty alleviation programmes.

### **2.3 Data Analysis Technique**

The data collected on the first objective of the study were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as mean, percentages and frequencies. The second research objective was attained through the aid of paired samples t-test. There are two main types of t-test: an independent-measures t-test – when samples are not matched – and a matched-pair t-test - when samples appear in pairs (Gujarati and Sangeetha, 2007). The value of *t* may be calculated using statistical packages such as SPSS or EViews. The t-test for the equality of means (t Test algorithms) is given as follows:

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{\sqrt{(s_1^2/n_1 + s_2^2/n_2)}}$$

The t- test statistics is given as; .....

Where:  $\bar{x}_1$  is the mean for Group 1.(economic empowerment index before joining poverty alleviation programme);  $\bar{x}_2$  is the mean for Group 2 (economic empowerment index after joining poverty alleviation programme);  $n_1$  is the number of people in Group 1 (economic empowerment index before joining poverty alleviation programme);  $n_2$  is the number of people in Group 2. (economic empowerment index after joining poverty alleviation programme);  $s_1^2$  is the variance for Group 1( economic empowerment index before joining poverty alleviation programme);  $s_2^2$  is the variance for Group 2 (economic empowerment index after joining poverty alleviation programme). The symbol  $s^2$  stands for the variance. The variance is the standard deviation without the square root, i.e. nothing more than the sum of the deviations of all the scores from the mean divided by n-1. The formula above is for testing the significance of difference between two independent samples, i.e., groups of events.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Result in Table 1 indicated that the majority (58.3 per cent) of the women were members of a cooperative society, 63.5 per cent were members of community based organization (CBO), and 60.9 per cent were members of the Esusu. Their reasons for joining such groups are related to forming a safety net for the members so as to shield themselves from the risks of poverty. The result further showed that 66.3 per cent of the women had engaged in jobs aimed at poverty alleviation. Only 6.0 per cent identified that they were not member of any PAP by government. Among those that were identified as members, 32.6 per cent were members of TAP, 30.8 per cent were members of ESI while 20.5 per cent were members of WFSH.

Table 1: Level of involvement in poverty alleviation programmes

<i>Item</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<b>Member of a cooperative society</b>		
“Yes”	225	58.3
“No”	161	41.7
<b>Engagement in any job or employment for purpose of alleviating poverty</b>		
“Yes”	256	66.3
“No”	130	33.7
<b>Member of any community based organization (CBO)</b>		
“Yes”	245	63.5
“No”	141	36.7
<b>Member of any contributory credit society</b>		
“Yes”	235	60.9
“No”	151	39.1
<b>Member of any poverty alleviation programmes sponsored by government</b>		
Empowerment Support Initiative (ESI)	119	30.8
The Adolescent Programme (TAP)	126	32.6
Women Fish Sellers Association (WFSH)	79	20.5
Widowhood Centre (WC)	23	6.0

Source: Field Data (2012).

Table 2 showed that majority of the women had benefited from government sponsored PAP (75.4%) and from any other PAP (90.7%). It is evident that more women benefited from other PAP than government sponsored PAP. The result further showed that almost half (50.3%) of the women were having an annual income below N100,000 before joining the PAP but after joining the PAP, 75.0 per cent had an annual income of more than ₦100,000. The implication of the findings in this section is that women who really desire to improve their wealth status need not rely on government-sponsored poverty alleviation programmes alone. The fact that 75 per cent of the women who joined poverty alleviation programmes had their income levels raised above their erstwhile ₦100,000 (equivalent of US \$632.91 in 2012 US dollars at an exchange rate of 158 to 1 US dollar) participation in and access to poverty alleviation programmes have the capacity of boosting income levels of women thus reducing income poverty.

Table 2: Impact from poverty alleviation programmes

Item	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
<b>Benefited from any poverty alleviation programme sponsored by government.</b>			
Yes	292	75.6	75.6
No	94	24.4	100
<b>Benefited from any of the poverty alleviation programs</b>			
Yes	350	90.7	90.7
No	32	8.3	100

Source: Field Data (2012).

It was not certain whether the income change after participating in poverty alleviation programmes by the women in this study was significant enough on statistical grounds to use for making policy statements. Therefore a more cursory examination was done by the t-test, whose results are presented in Table 3. Results in Table 3 shows a significant increase ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the mean income of the women before participating in PAP (₦22,2937.17, or approximately USD 1411.00) and after joining the PAP (₦304,590.67, or approximately USD1,927.79), an increase of about 36.6 per cent. The t-test result enables us to reject the hypothesis that there is no significant change in income of women who participated in poverty alleviation programmes before and after participating in the PAP. This implies that PAP have positive impacts on the welfare, in particular incomes, of women who participated in the programmes. It is, however, beyond the scope of this study to assess the effects of other variables on income change other than participation in PAP.

Table 3: Approximate income earned by the women before and after joining poverty alleviation programme

Item	Mean (in Naira and kobo)
<b>Income before participating in the poverty alleviation programme.</b>	₦ 222937.17 (USD 1411.00)
<b>Income earned after joining any registered poverty alleviation programme.</b>	₦304590.67 (USD1,927.79)
<b>t – value</b>	8.011
<b>p – value</b>	0.00

Source: Field Data (2012).

Table 4 shows the income generated from different sources before and after joining the PAP. The results in the table revealed that almost all livelihood activities



studied except two, forestry and hunting, did not show a significant differential in income among the indigenous women who participated in PAP activities before and after joining the PAPs. It was, however, difficult to explain why some activities indicated negative differentials (i.e. livestock/poultry/fisheries). It is possible that the women who invested their money in these livelihood activities were probably not experienced or trained in these businesses and lost all their investments they used in the activity after joining or benefitting from PAP. This may also be attributed to the natives of the city and the environment. From these results, it could also be noted that the services of forestry and hunting were not available to the women in the area. Among the activities that indicated positive income changes after participation by the indigenous women in the study (as shown in Table 4), we found that crop farming and gardening had income differentials of US\$ 486.55 equivalence after participation; wholesale and retail achieved a US\$602.51 rise in income; manufacturing US\$537.97; services US\$7078.50; and communication, computer, and photocopying US\$706.11. The transportation services sector had a mean appreciated income of US\$2341.77; trading/merchandise US\$481.71; while other activities such as banking and insurance witnessed mean income differentials of US\$1,999.42 after participating in PAP. The t-statistics estimated for all of these factors were significant at a one per cent level. On the whole, it is evident from the findings of this study that participation in PAP activities benefitted the livelihoods of women who participated in the programmes.

Table 4: Income realized per annum before and after participating in PAP

<i>Source of income</i>	<i>Income realized per annum before poverty alleviation programme participation in Naira</i>	<i>Income realized per annum after poverty alleviation programme participation in Naira</i>	<i>Differential Income in Naira</i>	<i>Change in Income in USD</i>	<i>t – value</i>
Crop Farming, Gardening	112500	189375	76875	486.55	9.94***
Livestock, Poultry	220000	110239.6	-109760.36	-694.69	10.46***
Fisheries	300000	483333.3	183333.33	1160.34	13.15***
Forestry, Hunting	148571.4	293571.4	145000	917.72	1.05
Wholesale, Retail	117385.3	212582	95196.72	602.51	11.89***
Manufacturing	149302.3	234302.3	85000	537.97	6.04***
Services	200848	1319252	1118403.55	7078.50	3.73***
Communications, Computer, and Photocopying	118984.5	230550.4	111565.89	706.11	12.05***

Services					
Transport Services	360000	730000	370000	2341.77	10.45***
Other Activities, i.e. Banking, Insurance (n = 22)	404545.5	720454.6	315909.1	1999.42	14.44***
Trading	110697.4	186807	76109.65	481.71	25.31***

Source: Field Data (2012). NB: “\*\*\*” = Figures significant at a 1% level of statistical significance; “\*\*” implies figures are significant at a 5% level and; “\*” implies figures are statistical significant at a 10% level.

Table 5 in the Appendix indicates that the percentage of women who had no property before joining the PAP decreased after joining the PAP. Therefore, the acquisition of property significantly increased after joining the PAP. In most of the properties considered, none of the women possessed more than one before joining the PAP. Some of the properties that were acquired most (> 4 items) were GSM handsets at 47.2 per cent, radio sets at 42.2 per cent, televisions at 42.2 per cent, kerosene stoves at 40.9 per cent, computers at 29.0 per cent, wheel barrows at 32.9 per cent, and air conditioners at 29.5 per cent. The rent paid for accommodation also increased from N65,414.508 to N100, 505.18. This is a reflection of the change from a low to a high-quality house.

## 4. Conclusion

The study had been able to find that a majority of the indigenous women in Port Harcourt metropolis participate actively in various poverty alleviation activities (both government initiated and privately organized ones). There are benefits uncovered by this research which appear to encourage them to do so. One of such benefits is the increase in personal incomes which accrue to them after joining the programmes. It was found, for instance, that after joining the PAP, 75.5 per cent of them experienced an increase in income of 36.6 per cent. This development is a salvo to poverty alleviation programmes and underlies the need to put women in the forefront of poverty alleviation programme designs. With this finding, it is evident that one of the ways to ensure sustainable development in Nigeria is to encourage indigenous women to participate in poverty alleviation programmes. They appear to convert investment on them into more desirable results. The findings, which showed that statistically significant differences existed in the income of the women from various sources of livelihood or economic undertakings, corroborated the earlier finding. However, it is recommended that more rigorous studies be carried out using inferential statistics such as regression models based on time series data that include other variables to test whether income changes were attributed to any other factor other than participation in the PAP. For sustainable development to be attained, the pillar of human development must not be neglected. Efforts must be made to put poverty alleviation and gender inclusion in the forefront of sustainable development programmes. We recommend that more programmes designed at alleviating poverty

in Rivers State of Nigeria where Port Harcourt is located target indigenous women. In addition, we also recommend the establishment of entrepreneurship capacity building programmes to enable the women achieve optimal input while participating in the poverty eradication programmes.

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## Appendix A

Table 5: Number of household items acquired before and after participating in the poverty alleviation programme (n=386).

Properties	Before poverty alleviation programme		After poverty alleviation programme	
<b>Television</b>				
None	183	47.4	172	44.6
One	203	52.6	163	42.2
Two	-	-	39	10.1
Three	-	-	4	1.0
Four	-	-	8	2.1
<b>CD Player</b>				
None	262	67.9	63	16.3
One	124	32.1	257	66.6
Two	-	-	52	13.5
Three	-	-	14	3.6
<b>Radio Set</b>				
None	183	47.4	172	44.6
One	203	52.6	163	42.2
Two	-	-	39	10.1
Three	-	-	4	1.0
Four	-	-	8	2.1
<b>Video Set</b>				
None	301	78.0	158	40.9
One	85	22.0	186	48.2
Two	-	-	38	9.8
Three	-	-	4	1.0
<b>GSM Handset</b>				
None	198	51.3	53	13.7
One	188	48.7	182	47.2
	-	-	116	30.1
	-	-	31	8.0
	-	-	4	1.0
<b>Electric generator</b>				
None			175	
One	308		171	
Two	78		40	
	-			
<b>Motorcycle</b>				
None			260	67.4
One	347	89.9	99	25.6
Two	39	10.1	27	7.0
	-	0.0		
<b>Car</b>				

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None	329	85.2	227	58.8
One	53	13.7	123	31.9
Two			22	5.7
Three			10	2.6
No Response				
<b>Cable / Satellite</b>				
None	4	1.0	120	31.0
One	293	75.9	221	57.3
Two	89	23.1	45	11.7
No Response	-	-	-	
<b>Fridge</b>				
None	4	1.0	143	37.0
One	231	59.8	202	52.3
No Response	151	39.1	23	6.0
			18	4.7
<b>Deep freezer</b>				
None	4	1.0	146	38.2
One			174	45.5
Two			58	15.2
No Response			4	1.0
<b>Gas cooker</b>				
None	302	79.1	177	45.9
One	69	18.1	177	45.9
Two	11	2.9	24	6.2
No Response			8	2.1
<b>Kerosene stove</b>				
None	291	75.4	148	38.7
One	95	24.6	158	41.4
Two			72	18.8
No Response			4	1.0
<b>Computer</b>				
None	227	58.8	218	56.5
One	155	40.2	112	29.0
Two	4	1.0	33	8.5
No Response			15	3.9
<b>Washing machine</b>				
None				
One	321	84.0	4	1.0
Two	61	16.0	4	1.0

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Three				
No Response	4	1.0	207	53.6
<b>Electric fan</b>				
None				
One	249	65.2	54	14.0
Two	133	34.8	75	19.4
Three			38	9.8
Four			12	3.1
No Response			155	40.6
			95	24.6
<b>Air conditioner</b>				
None				
One	232	60.1	64	16.6
Two	142	37.2	42	10.9
Three	8	2.1	22	5.8
Four			4	1.0
No Response			195	51.6
	300	78.5	114	30.2
<b>Wheel barrow</b>				
None			45	11.9
One	70	18.3	16	4.2
Two	12	3.1	8	2.1
Three				
Four				
No Response				
<b>Plots of land acquire</b>				
None				
One	300	79.4	190	49.7
Two	70	18.5	127	33.9
No response	8	2.1	57	14.9
	344	89.1	4	1.0
<b>Building erected</b>				
None				
One	38	9.8	211	54.7
Two	4	1.0	123	31.9
No Response	317	83.0	48	12.4
Accommodation rent	65	17.0	229	59.3
before participation	170000.00		210000.00	

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Source: Field Data (2012)