

# Impact of Development Programmes on the Socio-Economic Development of Women in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Nigeria

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## **Abstract**

*The study identified impact of development programmes on the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Three hundred and fourteen (314) women were drawn from a population of 1569 women of all the registered women organizations in Port Harcourt using proportionate sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire developed through literature and containing structured items. Data analysis used frequency counts and the mean. It was found out that development programmes improved women participation in development programmes, improved use of modern home appliances, improved health status with improved dieting and healthy eating, improved women economic status, improved safe water supply, and improved capacity of women to plan development projects, among others. It was therefore recommended that women should be given unlimited access to educational programmes with provision of social amenities, and that Government agencies and individuals interested in women development should begin to redirect their attention towards adopting appropriate policies and actions that will place women in a position of strength for socio-economic development.*

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**Keywords:** *Development programmes, women socio-economic development, women development programmes, Port Harcourt.*

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## **Introduction**

The promotion of women socio-economic development remains a key strategy for poverty reduction and community development at large. This is because women, according to Mbabazi and Lilian (2015), usually invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than their men counterparts. Investment in the socio-economic development of women therefore is a product venture that yields the highest returns of all development investment (OECD, 2010).

The development of the social and economic life of a people solely lies on the economic background of that society. When there is inflow of developmental activities in a given society, there is likely to be economic growth and improvement in the life of the people of that society. The women are not left out in these economic activities. The increase in the number of women entrepreneurs involved in starting new businesses is therefore critical for a society's long-term economic growth. This is the reason no responsible Government can afford to neglect the development of women.

These socio-economic activities which in turn develop women according to Orlukwu (2019) have such components as skill acquisition, crafts-making, on-the-job training, apprenticeship programmes, agricultural extension, and rural development projects clearly designed to increase production and raise productivity. These, put together will bring about improved food supplies, capacity building for labour and productivity together with basic health and guaranteed nutrition. A large body of microeconomic evidence according to Sen (2010) shows that increases in women education generally lead to increases in their labour force participation as well as increases in their earnings.

This educated women greater participation in the labour market and their higher earnings are thought to be good and to be encouraged because a greater proportion of women's income than men is spent on child goods (Subbarao and Raney, 2015). Education of women according to Subbarao and Raney improves child health because of educated mothers' greater knowledge of the importance of hygiene and of simple remedies.

Through education therefore, women are empowered. As Orlukwu (2019) puts it, women empowerment means increasing women's authority and control over the resources and decisions that affect their lives. As women exercise real choice, they are empowered having the capacity to deal with matters affecting their lives economically, political, socially, spiritually and otherwise (Akanbi and Jekayinfa, 2011). Empowerment programmes are therefore meant to translate to socio-economic development through improved income, improved basic needs and security, improved quality of life, and higher political awareness and participation. But the investigators could not locate any micro level study focused on impact of development programmes on the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt against the backdrop that development programmes and opportunities are on-going in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Thus, this study was therefore planned to examine the impact of development programmes on the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt Metropolis with the following objectives.

1. To find out the level of impact of education development programmes on the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt.
2. To ascertain the level at which health development programmes impact on the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt.
3. To determine the impact of agricultural development programmes on the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt.

### **Methodology**

The study covered Port Harcourt which is the capital city of Rivers State of Nigeria with a characteristic urban population.

Twenty (20) percent of 1,569 registered women of all the registered women organizations in Port Harcourt were proportionately drawn and studied as the sample. Data were collected by the use of validated questionnaire containing structured items developed through literature. Copies of the questionnaire were administered and retrieved on the spot during the meetings of the women organizations with the help of 2 trained field assistants. The respondents rated on a 4-point summated rating scale of level of impact and agreement. Data analyses used frequency counts and the mean. Using a criterion mean of 2.55 decision was reached on each table item by item.

**Table 1: Mean responses on level of impact of education development programmes on women socio-economic development**

*N = 314*

S/No.	Impact of education	Responses				$\sum fx$	$\bar{x}$	Decision
		VHL	HL	LL	VLL			
1.	Increased women socio-economic status	61	163	20	70	843	2.68	High level
2.	Increased women participation in development programmes	89	77	95	53	830	2.64	High level
3.	Enhancement of women socio-economic lives	71	140	48	55	855	2.72	High level
4.	Proper use of modern home appliances as a result of enlightenment programme	96	123	59	36	907	2.88	High level
5.	Participation in development programme in knowing that it promotes socio-economic life	116	76	72	50	886	2.82	High level

Result in table 1 identified increased women socio-economic status, increased women participation in development programmes, and proper use of modern home appliances as perceived impact of education development programmes all at a high level, on women socio-economic development in Port Harcourt Metropolis. This shows that, to a high level education development programmes improved women socio-economic development in Port Harcourt. This finding corroborates Imogie (2013), who affirmed that adequate education and skills are major keys to women socio-economic development. The findings here also agree with

Enemuo (2001) whose study posits that an effective and sustainable process of women socio-economic development must necessarily include the expansion of women access to educational opportunities, skill acquisition and positions of authority. Without mincing words therefore, it is pertinent to note that women play important role as educators and, the higher the educational level of the women, the more effective they are in transmitting the knowledge required for their children to achieve a better quality of life as well as enhancing their participation in community development.

**Table 2: Mean responses on level of impact of health development programmes on the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt**

*N = 314*

S/No.	Impact of health development programmes	Reponses				$\sum fx$	$\bar{x}$	Decision
		VHL	HL	LL	VLL			
1.	Helping women understand how to live health	98	121	60	35	910	2.89	High level
2.	Improved dieting and health eating	86	109	75	44	865	2.75	High level
3.	Improved health status	111	88	90	25	913	2.90	High level
4.	Active involvement in health and related programmes	97	106	40	71	857	2.72	High level
5.	Improved social welfare	81	68	87	78	780	2.48	Low level

Table 2 revealed that to a high level, health development programmes help women understand how to live healthy ( $x=2.89$ ) with improved dieting and healthy eating ( $x=2.75$ ), and improved health status ( $x=2.90$ ). Table 2 also show that to a high level, health development programmes improved participation of women in programmes. This finding corroborates Canning and Schultz (2012) who claimed that improved reproductive health services benefit the societies. This benefit of improved reproductive health no doubt influences earnings. Results from Chaudhuri (2009) also support this benefit that improved access to reproductive health services was associated with increase in women's earnings. In support of the findings here, Martorell and Melgar (2010) earlier affirmed that the health of a mother can affect the health of subsequent generations. The health of a mother in the overall socio-economic development of a society is therefore paramount.

**Table 3: Mean responses on impact of agricultural development programmes on women socio economic development in Port Harcourt.**

$N = 314$

S/No.	Impact of Agricultural Development Programmes	Reponses				$\sum fx$	$\bar{x}$	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD			
1.	Increases women income	88	98	79	49	853	2.71	Accept
2.	Improves road network	121	66	51	76	860	2.73	Accept
3.	Reforms extension services	163	31	102	18	967	3.07	Accept
4.	Safe and portable water availability to the people	95	115	44	60	873	2.78	Accept
5.	Enhancement of capacity to plan agric and agric related programme in the future	172	41	28	73	940	2.99	Accept

Table 3 shows that all the 5 items studied were agreed upon as impact of agricultural development programmes on the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt. Specifically increase in the income of women, improved road network, reformation of extension services, provision of safe and portable water, and enhancement of capacity to plan programmes were all agreed upon by respondents as impacts of agricultural development programmes on the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt as each item achieved above the criterion mean of 2.55. Results in table 3 therefore show that agricultural development programmes have improved the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt.

This finding corroborates Omorede (2014) who recommended that in order to reduce time spent for labour, appropriate technologies for food processing, preservation and storage should be made available for women, including transportation facility that will free women from head loading, increased provision of portable water, and cheap and reliable energy supply to reduce long hours that women work. It is therefore important to take into consideration, planned interventions to improve women's ability to take advantage of incentives, thus enhancing overall economic efficiency.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study identified impact of development programmes on the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt. The study concluded that education, health and agriculture

development programmes improved the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt.

The study therefore recommends that women should be given unlimited access to educational programmes, land, credit facilities and other inputs needed to progress in agricultural programmes, and that Government agencies at all levels, including individuals interested in women development should begin to redirect their attention towards adopting appropriate policies and actions that will place women in a position of strength for socio-economic development which will eventually lead to self-reliance.

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