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## Education and Cultural Transformation as a Panacea for Women Empowerment and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*In the world today, women constitute a higher percentage of the population of most societies. Hence, they make up an important group in the world society. Therefore, it is imperative to focus attention on discussions which affect their education and how such education impacts on sustainable development. Education is an effective tool in the emancipation and empowerment of women. The greatest single factor which can improve the status of women in any society is education. It is an indispensable tool that enables women not only to gain more knowledge about the world but helps them to get social status, positive self esteem and self confidence, necessary courage and inner strength to face challenges in life. One of the most critical challenges that has hindered development in Nigeria today, is the prevalence and sustenance of unwholesome cultural and traditional practices that have not only debased the dignity of women as human beings but have also propped up structures of oppression and servitude in which women are seen as objects in captivity, without basic rights or freedom. In most parts of the world, Africa and especially Nigeria, women education is being neglected due to the belief that whatever level of education women acquire would be useful mainly in their matrimonial homes. Women in Nigeria have had various challenges in order to obtain equal education in all forms of formal education in Nigeria. Education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such since the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. It is therefore pertinent to address this issue. The fact still remains that educating a woman is like educating the whole nation. It is on this note that this paper takes a cursory examination at ways of enhancing women education for women empowerment and sustainable development. The paper observed that whatever forms women are educated; that is formal or informal, they are made better-off than their non-educated counterparts. Useful recommendations were made to help liberate the encumbrances militating against women education and empowerment in Nigeria.*

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**Keywords:** Education; Cultural transformation; Panacea, Empowerment; Sustainable development.

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### **Introduction**

Education all over the world has been known as the cornerstone for sustainable development. In Africa women represent about two thirds of the world illiterate adults while girls account for a similar proportion of the worlds out of school population, UNESCO (2002).Indeed, for women to be integrated into development process unto sustainability, they need quality

education. The status would make them become co-partners in national development and decision making processes. The emancipation of women from all forms of exploitation (discrimination on the basis of sex or gender, oppression, inequality and alienation from the control of social surplus or wealth etc) is the beginning of any revolution; economic, political or social-cultural.

Women form a high percentage of the world population and as such they need quality literacy education to be able to contribute their quota to the development of the nation, UNESCO (2002). There is now the realization that sustainable human development (true development) cannot be effective if half of the human race (the women folk) remain illiterates, ignorant, marginalized and discriminated against, Okemakiude (2014). In Nigeria presently, the women folk have come a long way in business, politics, education, sports and various other professions. They have made a remarkable mark in their efforts to expunge the limitations of the past which have tended to place them permanently in the kitchen and bedroom, Owejie (2011). That notwithstanding, it is not all through a bed of roses for women education and empowerment. This is evident in the fact that majority of Nigerian women have not been fully metalized, educated or empowered to contribute to national development or be truly developed. Hence, the true development is the development of people through education.

Nigeria is a social patriarchy in which every dimension of women's oppression manifests sexual violence, wife battering, early marriages, limited access of women to education, poverty, inequalities, confinement, meager income, social deprivation, political exclusion and abandonment and the unwholesome subjection of women to harmful cultural and traditional practices such as female circumcision, non-ownership of property and inheritance, rights, access to land and poor wages etc (Ikoni, 2003). Therefore, if development is to be achieved and sustained in Nigeria, conscious efforts must be made to transform our culture (and its values) so as to dismantle those colluding structures of servitude and oppression against women. For the process of cultural transformation (revolution) to be accelerated and achieved, purposeful and functional education based on the ideology of liberation (mental, psychological and physical) must be employed as a tool in the task of the struggle for women emancipation. In Nigeria, a lot of programs have been implemented to better the lives of women like -

- Better Life Program for Rural Women in 1987,
- Family Support Program in 1994,
- Family Economic Advancement Program in 1997,
- National Poverty Eradication Program in 1999, and
- Poverty Alleviation Program in 2000 etc.

All these measures have been implemented with a view to reducing the level of poverty and improving welfare of the masses who are mostly women, yet the condition of women leaves much to be desired.

In view of the above, this study is undertaken to examine the role of education not only in the promotion of knowledge and skills but as an important instrument in the establishment or cultivation of new norms and values needed for change in any society. This study has therefore posed some questions to enable it analyze the role of education and cultural transformation as tools for women emancipation and sustainable development in Nigeria:

- i. What is education?
- ii. What are the benefits of women education in Nigeria?
- iii. What are the constraining factors that affect women education in Nigeria?
- iv. How can the constraining factors to women education be mitigated?
- v. What is empowerment/ Women empowerment?
- vi. What is sustainable development?

- vii What is the role of cultural transformation in women empowerment and sustainable development?
- viii How can women be empowered for sustainable development?

## Literature Review

### Concept of Education

Education, in its broadest sense, refers to the ways in which people learn/acquire skills and gain knowledge and understanding about the world and about themselves. Education is concerned with the general acquisition of values, knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is designed to remove the chains of ignorance, superstition and diseases. Ojebode (2004) describes education as the surest tool for the full emancipation and development of the individual as well as the advancement of the society. It helps people to earn more income and become more productive, it also leads to improvements in health, nutrition and people are empowered to transform their own lives and those of their communities through acquiring the basic skills of literacy and numeracy as well as the capacity to utilize knowledge and information, (Hamman, 2006). Engine –Dehir (2009) affirmed that education is not charity rather a fundamental human right for all people irrespective of sex, race, economic status which is the key to sustainable development, peace and stability among countries.

According to Max (2005), education is the process in which an individual acquire skills and knowledge about the unknown. Education plays a critical role in lifting individuals or families out of their state of poverty and destitution. It provides the necessary knowledge and skills that aid in reducing poverty, as well as hunger, by boosting productivity. The effectiveness of education can span across many areas of life including economic activity, gender equality, maternal health, and skills development.

Education promotes gender equality, improve and empower the lives of women. Educated women that work in agriculture for instance, are able to reduce poverty through an increase in productivity, wages, income and even crop yield. It is also linked to improved social and economic conditions. Although formal education is crucial, it is also important to consider adult literacy. According to UNDP report (2005), if women living in low income countries were to have basic literacy skills, a good number of people could be lifted out of hardship. This could be achieved through “informal” education, or developmental activities such as skills training. A multifaceted approach of empowering women through skills training has proven to uplift families and communities. Udeozor (2003) asserted that women education is perhaps the most fundamental instrument to national development. The success of national transformation depends to a large extent on the active participation of women. Learning a skill or trade enables women, to become self sufficient through income-generating activities. The essence of education whether formal or informal, is to produce a person who will be a useful member of the society.

### Notion of Empowerment/Women Empowerment:

Empowerment can be defined as a “multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important” (Page and Czuba 1999). Empowerment in this context means women gaining more power and control over their own lives. As such, it can be conceptualized as an important process in reaching gender equality.

As women dedicate more time to unpaid activities, they are often dependent on men’s income and less protected through financial savings, pension entitlements and property in their name. This means that women are at greater risk of poverty and have fewer opportunities in the labour market. The general understanding is therefore that women need to be “empowered”

in order to narrow the “gender gap” and to create an equal playing field between women and men before gender equality can be reached and maintained.

According to Nelly (2005), empowerment denotes a process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources and the means or enabling the access to and control over such means and resources. This implies that the individual has the potential to acquire power upon her own initiative or that another party could make it possible for her to have power. Esere (2001) defines empowerment as a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision making power and control to transformative action.

### **Notion of Sustainable Development**

Literarily, development has been defined as a qualitative increase in the output of a nation from all productive sectors of the economy. It is a state in which the various sectors of the economy are operating at full capacity to provide a better life for the citizens. In the late 1980s the report *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development defined the concept “sustainable development” as development which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. While aiming to maximize the well-being of today’s generation, it is important to take a long-term perspective, taking into account the consequences of our actions for our children, their children and grandchildren, ensuring that the resources they will require for their own well-being are not depleted, and that the natural environment into which they will be born will not be polluted or destroyed.

Sustainable development is conceptualized as resting on three inter-related pillars: economic development, social development and environmental protection. In this spirit it is important to acknowledge that the promotion of gender equality also requires a cross-cutting and integrative approach. It is important not to conceptualize women’s empowerment and gender equality as a question of social development alone, but as a cross-cutting issue in economic and socio-cultural development and environmental protection.

### **Nexus between Education and Cultural Transformation for Women Empowerment**

Education as a process focuses on the development of a total person; his intellectual potentials, skills, productive capacity, the development of his/her character, his psychological adjustment and balance, his social skills, his political and artistic values. Culture on the other hand refers to the way of life evolved by a people in their environment. It covers the social, aesthetic, religious, norms and modes of organization which together distinguishes a people from its neighbours (Okpaga, 2003). The basic components of people’s culture are norms and values. Norms according to Pervucci and Knudsen (1983), are expectations that define what is acceptable or required in a social situation. As rules of social behaviour which are prescriptive, they specify how people should and should not behave in various institutions or society. Values are the standards set by society which should serve as guides to what is right and proper for people in that society. Values are the basis of the judgments people make as to what is desirable, correct and good as well as what is undesirable and bad (Nkom, 1997; Okpaga, 2003). The process of cultural transformation is therefore expected to create new set of norms and values. It further involves rapid and fundamental changes in attitudes, thinking, behaviours, instilling self esteem in both man and woman, and a sense of efficiency or ability to contribute to development, promoting a competitive social environment in which the woman is not alienated from the society but her confidence is developed in line with the interest of the society (Adedeji, 1999). The entire process of cultural transformation explained above is expected to grease the engine of women empowerment defined or conceived in this work as an organized framework in which women as oppressed groups strive to achieve greater freedom, equality, social justice, improvements

in their material conditions and social advancement (Agu, 2000). The reciprocal or dynamic relationship between education and the process of cultural transformation is therefore conceived and anchored on the premise that education helps in shaping new patterns of norms and values which hitherto have posed as obstacles or impediments to the development process. A society's culture therefore changes in accordance with the level of knowledge and skills acquired towards transforming the environment, such that the people not only meet their basic material needs, but also become available for new patterns of socialization and behaviours (Okpaga, 2003).

### **Theoretical Basis of the Study**

This paper derives its theoretical foundation from the "Women in Development" (WID) theory and the Feminist Theory.

Women in Development approach emerged in 1970s and were adopted by the United Nations Agencies such as UNDP and World Bank. It was based on the idea that education leads to economic development and therefore advocates for inclusion of women in economic and educational policies as a means of achieving women empowerment. WID approach holds that there is relationship between education and employment in the formal and Non formal sectors as education helps women to acquire skills which enable them to secure employment. WID approach has led to policies and strategies which resulted in granting women equal access to education and participation in paid employment.

### **Feminist Theory:**

Feminist theory is any theory that discusses relations of men and women in the society. Thus, various feminist theories include cultural determinism, biological determinism, Marxian/radical feminism, liberal feminism and social feminism. It is unequivocal that women marginalization is mentioned in all feminist theories but different reasons are advanced for such marginalization in each strand of feminism (Okafor, Akinwale & Doyin – Hassan, 2007). Haralambos and Holborn (2008) posit that feminism is a worldwide movement to end sexism (the belief that the status of female is inferior to the status of male) by empowering women. It embraces political goals that offer gender equality. The ultimate aim of feminism is to end men's domination and rid society of the exploitation of women. Just like Marxist theory, they tend to see society as divided into social groups. To the feminist theory, the division is between men and women and not between classes of people. They see society as characterized by exploitation. Contemporary societies mostly exhibit traits of patriarchal structures as they are often male dominated in the following areas;

- Men have more power in the family.
- Men have better wages and employment opportunities.
- Men often enjoy higher status jobs.
- Men tend to have monopoly in political positions

The argument of liberal feminists is the basis of this paper because it stipulated the modalities for incorporating women into development as active players and partners in progress. These modalities include a gender balanced access to life enriching opportunities such as quality education, income, health, power and information (Okafor, Akinwale & Doyin –Hassan, 2007).

### **Materials and Methods**

This study is designed to carry out a purely qualitative survey on women education and cultural transformation as a remedy for women empowerment and sustainable development in Nigeria. It adopted content analysis of existing literatures through secondary sources of data.



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## **Results and Discussions**

### **The Benefits of Women Education**

The society and the family tend to gain from a literate woman. Literacy education is seen as a powerful agent of socialization in that it plays a tremendous role in preparing an individual to render active and useful service both to the family and society in general. Education gives women a voice in their families, in political life and on the world stage. It is a first step towards personal freedom and broader prosperity (Bokova; 2010). The benefits of educating a woman can be seen in the social, economic and political life of the society.

### **Social Benefits**

Literacy has been found to have large social benefits; such as increased life expectancy, reduced child mortality, raising healthy children and educating them. Literacy is at the core of education and especially education for all with its focus on basic education. A Child denied the right of a quality primary education is deprived not only as a child; he/she is also handicapped for life-unable to cope with situations requiring reading, writing and arithmetic unless given access to educational opportunities as a youth or adult. Educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school than the uneducated ones.

Studies have shown that increase in female schooling have been followed by declining child mortality and fertility. An educated woman can also help government to achieve its laudable goals and objectives through public enlightenment and national mobilization campaigns. In general, education wipes away ignorance, political apathy and encourages mutual understanding and cooperation among the various strata of society.

### **Economic Benefits**

The most important measurable forms of economic benefits include employment, earnings, enhanced general productivity, consumption behaviour, fiscal capacity (including tax revenue and the demand for social services). Education properly designed and provided imparts skills and knowledge to individuals that make them more productive in self-employment or in employment by others (UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report; 2006).

The role of women in the economic development of the nation cannot be overemphasized. They constitute 70% of the group that produces food for the nation. They cultivate and grow food to feed the family and the nation at large. Studies in Nigeria and indeed in other parts of the world show that education can help women increase productivity in wage employment where they work fewer hours and earn higher incomes and in the long run reduce poverty. Women when literate are also able to participate in self employment and in the informal sector which in turn leads to higher wage earning, more access to credit and production of goods for home consumption (Safo 1992, Morna 1999, Okojie 1997 and Abbe – Momudu 1999).

### **Political Benefits**

The empowering potential of education can translate into political participation and thus contribute to the quality of public policies and to democracy. The relationship between education and political participation is well established. Educated people are to some extent more likely to vote and voice more tolerant attitudes and democratic values (Hannum and Buchman; 2003). In addition, Egbo (2000) reported that educated women in Nigeria are confident enough to participate in community meetings, unlike illiterate women.

Notable women in Nigeria have contributed to the political development and raising the consciousness level of their fellow women. In Nigeria, we have women in the various States house of Assembly, House of Representatives and Senate all for the good of the nation.

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From the above benefits, it could be seen that the education of women has changed the traditional belief that the place of the woman is the kitchen. We have also seen that in this jet age, women have been a force to reckon with in the political and socio-economic life of the nation.

### **The Role of Women Education in Ensuring Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

There are various ways through which women can contribute to the development of the nation. Based on some of the special qualities possessed by women, a lot can be benefited from them if given the opportunity to be educated. Some of the benefits that can be derived from women education towards a sustainable development include:

#### **Increase in GDP:**

The World Bank in White (2013) pointed out that if the gap between male and female employment is closed, it would help to increase GDP in America by 9%, Europe by 13% and Japan by 16%. When women are given the opportunity to be educated, it will help to increase the workforce of the nation. Similarly, the activities of women in the various economic sectors of the economy have the potential of contributing to an increased GDP. This is because their contribution will help to augment the effort of their male counterpart in securing a higher GDP. An educated and skilled workforce is one of the pillars of the knowledge based economy. Increasingly, comparative advantages among nations come less from natural resources or cheap labour and more from technical innovations and the competitive use of knowledge. Studies also link education to economic growth: education contributes to improved productivity which in theory should lead to higher income and improved economic performance.

#### **Resource Management:**

Women all over the world are known to be better managers than their male counterpart. The prudent management of resources helps to reduce wastage and increase economic benefit from available resources. When women are properly educated, it helps them to put their managerial skill into use and help manage national economic and natural resources for the benefit of all. It is therefore advisable that women should be empowered through formal education on how they can harness their management abilities for the long term benefit of all citizens in the country.

#### **Building of a Healthy Nation:**

The health condition of the citizens is one of the factors that determine the lifespan of the masses. A healthy nation has also being linked to a wealthy nation. Education greatly benefits personal health, particularly powerful for women, it profoundly affects reproductive health, and also improves child welfare through better nutrition and higher immunization rates. Education may be the single most effective preventive weapon against HIV/AIDS. The education of women is therefore closely related to rising a healthy generation that would be empowered to contribute significantly to national development in a sustainable manner for women is usually known for their cleanliness and have the capacity of building a healthy nation.

#### **Reduced Dependency Rate:**

The education of women is one of the ways of reducing the level of dependency in the nation. The empowerment of women through education will assist in reducing the pressure on economic resources in the country. This will help to sustain the economic resources in the country towards the path of development. Similarly, empowering women through education

would also enable them to become self sufficient individuals. They would be equipped to learn and develop various means by which they can meet up with personal and societal needs. This will help to reduce the pressure on national resources and also reduce dependency level on their sponsors.

### **Quality Leadership:**

According to the report of Shinaba (2008) abuse of power, violations of human rights, mismanagement of national resources and under development are the order of the day for the past four decades that men have been in power. Similarly, the period in which men have been in power have been characterized by gross inequality corruption, and violence. However, as managers of the home, it is expected that if women are given the opportunity, they will be able to implement their managerial skills in the management of the various sectors of the economy. The quality of leadership that will be provided by women will be such that would be characterized with equality, peace, transparency and protection of human right. All these qualities are very important in building a stable nation.

### **Barriers/Constraints to Women Education and Empowerment in Nigeria**

The EFA report (2003/2004) shows that historically education in sub-Saharan Africa and even Asia was initially made available only to males. Ofor (2006) agrees with this report by saying that in pre-colonial and colonial era, opposition to western education was greater for girls than boys because parents and guardians believed that women education began and ended in the kitchen. Unfortunately this opposition did not end with the colonial rule. As observed by Nmadu (2000), the Nigerian society (pre-medium and contemporary) has been significantly dotted with peculiar cultural practices that are inimical to women's emancipation, such as early/forced marriage, wife inheritance and widowhood practices. Onyemunwa, (1998), Oghiator, (2005), and Achunine (2005) in their separate studies, also observed that women are victims of culture and tradition. Tahir (1999) observed that women were unfairly represented at all levels of the educational system. This was supported by Enem (2008), who came to a similar conclusion and outlined the factors militating against women education and empowerment to include the following.

- Preference given to the education of males.
- Early/child/forced marriages
- Sex stereotyping in certain responsibilities/careers
- Belief that women do not perpetuate the family nature
- Poverty
- Lack of proper education of parents, and
- Early unwanted pregnancy/child labour/sexual harassment.

Several factors according to Bamidele (2011) still affect women education and empowerment negatively. They include:

### **Religion/Cultural factors**

Some religious sects in Nigeria still believe and teach that women should not acquire western education as seen in the Boko Haram sect in northern Nigeria. Various cultures restrict the role of women to domestic activities, such as keeping the home clean, bearing children, cooking food for the entire family members etc. The society as at today sees these roles as less important as they require less extensive formal education for one to be able to perform them. This unfortunate misconception has been a major obstacle to women education in Nigeria.

Customs and traditions of patriarchal societies serve as great deterrent to women empowerment. Adegroye and Adegroye (2008) find out from their study that harmful



cultural practices militate against women empowerment. Bisika (2008) reports that cultural practices that promote gender-based violence exist and these act of violence are usually directed at women. And Briere (2004) identifies socio-cultural factors such as poverty, social inequality and inadequate social support as some of the variables that combine to determine the seriousness of the impact of violence against women. Ibekwe (2007) opines that in some countries, there are some cultural and traditional laws that negate women's rights which in one way or the other promote violence against women. In such countries one may argue that violence against women has been institutionalized. Also, Ebele (2003) explains that in some societies, inherited tradition prevents women from inheriting land both from their fathers or husbands thereby limiting their access to collateral and productive opportunities.

### **Educational factor:**

Majority of parents and guardians in some parts of Nigeria are illiterate and hence, do not know the importance of education let alone investing in it. Recent data released by the chairman of National Population Commission, Samaila Makamma, revealed that literacy level among parents and guardians in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria are as follows:

- South-West 73.6%
- South-South 71.9%
- South –East 74.1%
- North –West 33.8%
- North East 33.8%
- North-Central 54.9%

What this implies is that the literacy level in North West and North East combined is less than what obtains in any part of the South. The gender inequality in Nigeria's educational development as observed by Ikpenwa (2005) that in some parts of Nigeria, there exists a discriminatory tendency against the girl-child's education in favour of the boy-child education. Illiteracy remains at the center of women empowerment problems in Nigeria and the only effective way to meaningfully contribute to the emancipation of women is to widen the access of women and girls to quality education (Olakulein and Ojo, 2006). Suleiman (2009) describes education as the bedrock for empowerment and the only panacea to women empowerment and gender equality considering the fact that without education, it will be difficult to become genuinely economically empowered and relevant in the society and the world.

Akomolafe (2006) conducted a qualitative survey using interview and participatory experience and finds out that low education coupled with cultural discrimination against women is a constraint to women empowerment. Olekulein and Ojo (2006) states that the issue of women education is essential for rural development and the women are not well equipped to contribute their useful quota in the society as a result of illiteracy. Adegoroye and Adegoroye (2008) find out from their study that low literacy level of the rural women denied them access to vital information that can improve their lots economically.

Ebele (2003) opines that education increases the chances of employment for women thereby empowering them economically but unfortunately, equal access to education for girls is still a challenge in Nigeria and Africa. The African patriarchal culture favours the education of males to the detriment of females especially when family resources are limited, because the males propagate and carry on the family name which leads to low level of education for girls and employment in low paid jobs than males. This is evidenced from the fact that the proportion of females decreases as the level of education increases. The Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE, 2008) reports that only 1 girl for every 2 boys makes it to Senior Secondary and 1 girl for every 3 boys completes secondary education. Other problems identified by Ebele (2003) that affects women education which is the panacea to economic

empowerment are issues of early marriage, free mixing of adolescent males and females in schools etc.

However, effort is being made to address these problems through encouraging adult literacy training, pre-entry policy for pregnant school girls and teenage mothers as well as separation of males and females in secondary schools.

### **Financial factor:**

Many Nigerian families are still living in abject poverty. According to Wikipedia encyclopedia online (2011), 45% of Nigeria population still lives below poverty line. This implies that out of 155 million people (2010 estimate), over 69 million are still struggling to meet their basic needs of food, shelter and clothing and cannot afford to pay for education. Finance is the backbone of any economy and can limit the level of economic activities to an individual, society or country. Adegoroye and Adegoroye (2008) find out from their study that lack of finance and access to loans militate against women economic empowerment. Magaji and Aliyu (2007) also find that credit influences physical autonomy and affects most of the women empowerment indicators significantly. Dunford (2001) cited in Magaji and Aliyu (2007) states that loans with training are found more effective in addressing many socio-economic problems of women especially in developing countries. Furthermore, Malami (2008) identifies lack of proper funding as one of the fundamental problems blocking the chances of women from attaining economic empowerment and that if provided, it will assist to empower the economic position of women and consequently reduce the level of poverty.

Ebele (2003) explains that in some African countries, employment opportunities and per capita income of women is lower than that of men, which contribute to low economic profile of women. For instance, UNDP statistics show that women form about 70% of labour in the informal sector in Nigeria, most of them in very low yielding enterprise where employment remuneration is not regulated by law and so wages are very low.

High interest rate in Nigeria to the poor who are mostly women employed in the informal sector with low capital operation, limits the ability of women from getting financial assistance. Women therefore remain in vicious cycle of low investment, low output, and low profit and therefore, trapped in circles of poverty. Ott et-al (1995) cited in Ebele (2003) opines that where women have no direct access to land and cannot have collateral because of patriarchal and customary practices that pass property through the male line, limit women from having direct access to credit. Ahenkora et al cited in Ebele (2003) also states that women are more credit worthy than men, but legal requirements and lack of collateral still limit women's access to bank credit. Similarly, Ebele (2003) explains that in Uganda, because women do not own land and therefore have nothing to pledge for collateral, their access to credit is also limited. These have implication for increasing women's income in poverty alleviation programs which require credit or land as input into production possibilities.

### **Conclusion**

This paper examined the role of education and cultural transformation as tools for women empowerment and sustainable development. Education, formal or non-formal, is the foremost agent of empowerment, and women educational status in any nation correlates with its level of development. The higher the level of women educational status, the more developed the nation. And across all development issues, education is seen as a key way to help women overcome cultural, religious and financial barriers and as a source of empowerment. In the areas of sustainability and the environment, education is the transformative tool that allows women to be the change agents who can meet these key challenges, and that ensures their participation in the development process.

## Recommendations

In the course of this study the following recommendations were proffered:

- The Nigerian government has a crucial role to play in providing an enabling environment for Nigerian women to rekindle their hope and faith in the ability of the system to provide avenue for development for its people irrespective of sex, age, ability, religious inclination and other mundane considerations.
- Proper Legislation: The Nigerian nation owes the women folk the responsibility of removing those artificial and institutional barriers based on religion, culture or traditional considerations which have incapacitated the ability of Nigerian women to participate effectively and freely in national affairs particularly at the political and economic levels.
- Women on their part should strive to breakthrough developmental barriers with great determination, perseverance, unbreakable solidarity and genuine desires to conquer the natural challenges of their origin.
- Women organizations and movements have important roles to play by seeking to protect the interest of women. These organizations and movements should shoulder the responsibility of seeing that institutions are not deliberately structured to place hindrances and constraints on the paths of women.
- Government should provide more skills acquisition centers and adult literacy training centers at the grass root level especially in the rural areas where most of the poor and non-educated reside
- Education in Nigeria and in all its forms (Formal and Non formal) for women should be made compulsory and free up to tertiary level of education.
- Educated women should work hard to ensure that they raise social awareness of large number of women in the rural area, through effective educative programs, and mass communication as these will help to improve their self-confidence.
- The women should avail themselves any slightest opportunity offered by their parents, guardians, husbands and government to explore economic activities and improve their economic status. They should be dedicated in their pursuit of economic empowerment as it can provide improvement for their family members and the society at large.
- The women should be encouraged to join pressure-groups where they can be sensitized about issues affecting them like maternal health, infant mortality, HIV and AIDS, environmentally sustainable practices etc. as well as the importance of effective resource management.

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