

WOMEN SAFE HOUSE SUSTENANCE INITIATIVE

PROVIDING ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR WOMEN IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN IBADAN, OYO STATE NIGERIA: WHAT MUST BE DONE?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Nigeria, women are majority of the poor and economically disadvantaged. Gender inequality contributes to the experience of poverty and economic injustice by women, thus increasing their vulnerability to abuse.

We conducted community engagements, stakeholders' meeting and interviewed ten women who have faced economic violence in two local government areas (LGAs) in Ibadan, Oyo State Nigeria. Gender inequality entrenched in cultural norms support women poverty and economic violence in rural communities. New and existing legislation protecting women from economic injustice and violence should be implemented.

INTRODUCTION

Although both men and women suffer poverty, gender discrimination and social norms exacerbate poverty among women and girls through limited opportunities to education, economic activities, employment, etc. Majority of women (62.8%) living in extreme poverty reside in sub-Saharan Africa. The World Poverty Clock reports that women account for more than 70% of Nigerians living under \$1.90 daily. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified poverty among women due to the initial lockdown and reduced economic activities. Achieving sustainable development goal (SDG) 1 depend heavily on economic actualization of women.

In traditional Nigeria societies, sociocultural norms relegate women to work around the homes or be engaged in petty trading. Majority of women in rural communities are

engaged in unpaid activities or underpaid for their work. It is also the responsibility of women to feed and care for family members, which take so much of their time and limits their income-earning opportunities. To achieve economic justice, we need to address income gaps between males and females by specifically looking at favorable business environments and limitations in individual incomes.

This policy brief presents the main findings from interventions to reduce economic violence among women in rural communities in Ibadan, Nigeria. We conducted community engagements and qualitative interviews of women who have faced economic violence, with specific recommendations for stakeholders.

COMPONENTS OF INTERVENTION

1. 15 community engagements to raise awareness on economic justice for women – allowing women to own businesses in favorable environments, reduction in taxes and levies, rent shops and houses for business.
2. Market outreach and engagement of market leaders to advance favorable environments for women owned businesses in the market.
3. Religious centers mobilization campaigns
4. Stakeholders' engagement and capacity building meeting.

Qualitative study: As part of the activities, in-depth interview was conducted among 10 women who have faced economic violence. This has been covered into a documentary.

KEY FINDINGS

- Women are denied opportunities to rent houses and shops for business without a man co-signing the lease.
- Cultural norms that support masculinity and relegate women force women to be financially dependent on their partners for sustenance.
- Some religious institutions and sects prohibit women from working and living alone.
- Some men stop their wives from working or being economically engaged because of power imbalance and need to control their wives.

- Women pay higher levies for their businesses to community officials in some communities than men.
- Men who stop their wives from working cheat the government of taxes that should be paid by their wives, and deprive the entire society of development.

Other findings from this intervention programme included;

- Many women who were engaged in an income-earning activities before marriage or childbirth were stopped by their husbands.
- It is believed that an economically empowered women will become insubordinate to the husband. Thus, men seek all means to suppress their wives economically.
- Women carry a lot of financial burden in the homes and struggle to do this since they earn poorly.
- For women that engage in business activities, these businesses often collapse because the income is used for family feeding.
- Perpetrators of economic violence on women include spouses, house owners, and fellow women
- Preventing women from working contributes significantly to economic loss.

METHODOLOGY

The brief further was developed on our activities such as: conducting fifteen community engagement activities in ten communities, local government offices, two markets, and one religious center in Akinyele and Lagelu local government areas, Ibadan, South-West, Nigeria. Similarly, we interviewed 10 women in these LGAs who are facing economic injustice and violence from their partners and communities as well as stakeholders' engagement with funds from Urgent Action Fund Africa

RESULTS

Insights regarding the financial status of women which was impacted by unfavorable environments for their businesses, threats and prevention from working by their spouses. It also raises questions and concerns on economic justice. The interviews also revealed the experience of women who are denied the opportunity of securing houses or shops for the businesses of their choice.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The following recommendations for policies were made by the different stakeholders; At the Stakeholders Engagement on Economic Justice for women, it was recommended as follows;

1. Enactment of law to prohibit men from stopping their wives/partners from working. In cases where a man based on culture or religion prevents his wife/partner from working, such man should be mandated to bear all the financial burden of the home.
2. Concerning renting of accommodation and shops to women, a policy/law should be enacted making the refusal to give out houses or shops to women without the presence of a man or on the basis of their marital status an economic crime.
3. Laws/policies should be enacted and implemented to not only punish men who abuse women economically but to also ask them to pay compensations.
4. Community leaders, Local Government Areas and the State Government should create a policy that reduces the levies women pay for their businesses within communities.
5. Community leaders, Local Government Areas and the State Government should create a policy that protects women-owned businesses in male dominated business spaces such as tricycle riding and construction work.
6. There should be applicable check and balances for the enforcement of these laws.
7. Women should be encouraged to work and thrive in a safe and conducive space.
8. Government at all levels should bridge the income inequality gap between males and females
9. Women economic rights as enshrined in the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria are to be enforced.

REFERENCES

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