



## THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN ORGANIZATIONS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

This paper reviewed the roles/activities of the women organizations; identified the level of some women organizations contributions in the community and the constraints of these organizations participation. The review identified some leading women organizations and their contributions to the community development such as distribution of relief materials to IDPs, donations to victims of Nyanya bomb blasts. Distribution of materials inmates in prison, provision of community health centers, built schools and day care centers mention but a few. The constraints identified were inadequate funds; embezzlement of some scarce resources; others were illiteracy; limited access to political network and disunity. It is therefore recommended that empowerment and education should be targeted towards women to raise role models.

**Keywords:** Women Organization, Community Development, Empowerment, Nigeria

### INTRODUCTION

Community development is perceived as the provision of social amenities and infrastructure by an individual, group, organization or government for improvement to community as a support or assistance that is triggered by economic, political, social and physical environmental adversities (Barley 1996). In a wider scope, it can be seen as a process whereby government organizations, voluntary associations or public-private partnership including women organizations to ameliorate adversities in a community's economic, political, social, physical environment and to prevent future adversities. The contributions of Women organizations in community development projects can bring about positive changes.

In other words, community development is an activity of people living in a particular area or people joined together by a common interest mainly for the sole purpose of a development agenda (Ohaeghuchi, 2014).

Economic community development encourages business and job opportunities; political community development implies effective community associations both broad and active participation, while Social development encourages positive mind sets on their neighbors. Environmental community development on the other hand improves housing conditions, city services, recreational facilities, and helps clean up or prevent toxic or littered sites, and instill pride in one's home and community (Bawa *et al.*, 2010). It is a way that was conceived to solve these adversities and government's

inabilities to engender private participation in community development activities. It is in this background that the involvement of women voluntary associations becomes necessary, since women have been known to contribute to the development of a country and the future of mankind (Effah, 2017). It aims to ensure the recognition of women organizations by government agencies on a sustained basis and enjoy the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all spheres of life.

It is a truism the adage that says; behind every successful man is a woman. Women have been regarded as fragile and subordinate to the man but they can play very important role for the betterment of the society. This fragile nature has proved her taking domineering influence on many occasions in the history of mankind. Across the country, they have created innovative, comprehensive programs to meet the needs of their communities (Chinwendu 1980).

Women have established themselves as leaders in the community development process and acquire the skills that have brought positive changes to their communities. As effective builders of social capital, women leaders play key roles in establishing and maintaining important relationships and networks in their communities. Though, they are facing the challenges of racial, culture, economic and political barriers that exist in the community development process and in many cases overcoming those barriers become their motivation. While the comprehensive approach has influenced the evolution of the community development field, women's contributions have been neither widely acknowledged nor explicitly

credited. Women groups demonstrate variety of effective ways and women created social capital that is central to the existence of healthy communities. In fact, the contributions of women groups in community development projects can bring about significant positive changes. Thus, women groups have been proved to be one of the effective entry point for initiating activities or development projects in a community, which would benefit members of the community (Chinwendu, 1980). Despite the enormity of roles they play, their activities have been relegated. It is against this background that the review intended to answer the questions.

- (i) what are the roles/activities of some of the women organizations in Nigeria?
- (ii) What are the levels of some of the leading women organizations contributions to the community development?
- (iii) What are the constraints associated with participation of women organizations in community development?

The major objective of the review is to evaluate the contributions of women organization in community development effort in Nigeria while the specific objectives are to;

- (i) Identify the roles/ activities of some of the women organizations in Nigeria;
- (ii) Identify the levels of some of the leading women organizations contributions in the community development;

- (iii) Identify the constraints associated with participation of women organizations in community development.

### **Involvement of Women in National Development**

According to Effah, (2017) literature on Nigeria's national development is relatively silent on the contributions of women. However, 1975 (the International Women's Year), was a period that brought in ideas about the status of women. Moreover, awareness about the role of women in development gained momentum in Nigeria in the later half of the "1980s. Effah (2017) as a result of the effective participation of Nigerian women in the International Conference on Women in Beijing, China. In spite of these efforts, it is appropriate to state that the role of Nigerian women in development has not been sufficiently emphasized. In highlighting the Nigerian experience, three periods namely, the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial periods are important.

#### **Pre-colonial Period**

During the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women contributed to the sustenance of the kin groups. Pre-colonial Nigerian economy was basically at a subsistence level, and Nigerian women participated effectively in this economy. Apart from being mothers and wives and taking charge of the domestic sector, women contributed substantially to the production and distribution of goods and services. In the agricultural sector, the women farmed alongside their husbands and children. In south eastern Nigeria, women also took part in the production of palm oil and palm kernel. They also participated in local and

long distance trade in different parts of Nigeria and were fully involved in the procurement and sale of various food items and related commodities (Effah 2017). Women in pre-colonial Nigeria were fully involved in food processing, for example, fish drying (especially in the coastal areas of Calabar, Oron and the Niger Delta area) and garri processing. In eastern Nigeria, the women of Okposi, Uburu and Yala were very active in salt production. Women were engaged in pottery making, especially in Afikpo in present day Abia State, and in weaving. In northern Nigeria, even the women in purdah were involved in food processing and also traded with the aid of their children. Most often, these women supplied the means of sustenance for entire households.

Pre-colonial Nigerian women also provided health care and spiritual services, extensively. Most traditional religions feature immortal females as goddesses. Most goddesses in Nigeria were portrayed as river goddesses, fertility goddesses and earth goddesses. In the Niger Delta area, women provided music, songs and dances required during religious activities. Women also officiated as priestesses, diviners, healers, traditional birth attendants, and oftentimes as custodians of sanctuaries for gods and goddesses. According to Effah (2017) legal status of Nigerian women in pre-colonial times needs highlighting. Under the pre-colonial customary laws in most Nigerian societies, women were considered free adults. At the same time, certain limitations were imposed which subordinated them to male authority. Women had independent access to income farming, since land was usually owned communally, whoever worked or tilled the

land, whether male or female, derived the benefits. Nevertheless, women in many societies could not inherit land.

Aliyu (1992) stated that Education in pre-colonial times was functional. It enabled women to obtain a skill in order to earn a living. Olusheye (2009) observes that "a woman who was without a craft or trade, or who was totally dependent on her husband, was not only rare, but was regarded with contempt". As regards politics, women in pre-colonial Nigeria were an integral part of the political set up of their communities. Most often, they carried out separate functions from the men. These functions were fully complementary. In pre-colonial Borno, for instance, women played active parts in the administration of the state. They held very important offices in the royal family, including the offices of the Megira (the Queen mother) and the Gumsu (the by prominent women such as Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwel of Ossomari in the pre-colonial history of Nigeria cannot be ignored. Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed tremendous bravery and strength in the politics of Ife and Benin respectively, while Omu Okwei dominated the commercial scene of Ossomari in present day Delta State (Omu and Makinwa, "1987). Statistics of women rulers in pre-colonial era is shown in Table 1.

### **The Colonial Period**

The colonial economy was an export oriented one and it seriously undermined the prestige of the traditional occupations of Nigerian women. While it placed women at a great disadvantage, it enhanced the economic status of the British, Lebanese,

first wife of the Mai or King) (Ola, 1978). Women also played a very significant role in the political history of ancient Zaria. The modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century, by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as Queen. Queen Amina was a great and powerful warrior. She built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and extended the boundaries of her territory beyond Bauchi. The people of Kano and Katsina paid tributes to her. She turned Zaria into a very prominent commercial centre.

The story was not different in ancient Yoruba land. The Oba ruled with the assistance of a number of women referred to as the ladies of the palace. The ladies of the palace consisted of eight titled ladies of the highest rank. The significant role played Syrian and few Nigerian merchants. Many of the smaller markets, hitherto dominated by Women gradually disintegrated as a result of the emergence of expatriate firms such as John Holt, United African Company (U AC.) and Lever Brothers. Women were denied access to medium and large scale loans which were vital in operating at the bulk purchase level of the colonial economy (Curtin, 1964). During the colonial period, education was functional. The curricula emphasized religious instruction and clerical skills for boys and domestic science for girls. Technological and scientific based education was not encouraged. The curricula for girls enabled them to become good housewives, rather than income earners.

**Table 1:** Statistics of Women Rulers in Pre-colonial era

S/No	Name	Town/ Village	LGA	State	Type of Rule	Date
1.	Luwo Gadiaya	Ife	Ife central	Osun	Oni of Ife	Pre-colonial
2.	Iyayun	Oyo	Oyo	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial
3.	Orompoto	Oyo	Oyo	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial
4.	Jomijomi	Oyo	Oyo	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial
5.	Jepojepo	Oyo	Oyo	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial
6.	Queen Amina	Zazzau	Zaria	Kaduna	Queen	Pre-colonial
7.	Daura	Daura Emirate	Daura	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial
8.	Kofono	Daura	Daura	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial
9.	Eye-moi	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent-Monarch	Pre-colonial 1705- 1735AD
10-	Ayo-Ero	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent-Monarch	Pre-colonial 1854-55AD
11-	Gadiano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial
12-	Yawano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial
13-	Yakana	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial
14.	Wakam	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial
15.	Cadar	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial
16.	Agagri	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial
17.	Queen Kanbasa	Bony	Bonyi	Rivers	Queen	Pre-colonial

Source: Adeigbe, Adebayo & Abubakar (2013).

Emmanuel & Hippolgte (2014) analyzes that the historical processes through which the labor of women was increasingly appropriated even in kinship structures in pre-colonial Africa, utilizing the concepts of “rights in persons” and “wealth in people”. Reviewing the processes of production and reproduction, it explains why most slaves in pre-colonial Africa were women and discusses how slavery and slave trade intensified the exploitation of women. Second, it analyzes how the cultivation of cash crops and European missionary constructions of the individual, marriage, and family from the early decades of the 19th century sequestered

female labor and made it invisible in the realm of domestic production. Third, it discusses how colonial policies from the late 19th century reinforced the “capture” of female labor and the codification of patriarchy through the nature and operation of the colonial economy and the instrumentality of customary law.

Furthermore Effah (2017) said as regards politics, colonialism affected Nigerian women adversely as they were denied the franchise and very few of them were offered any political or administrative appointments. For instance, it was only during the 1950s that three women were

appointed into the House of Chiefs, namely Chief (Mrs) Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti (appointed into the Western Nigeria House of Chiefs); Chiefs (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu (both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs). It was also only in the 1950s that women in Southern Nigeria were given the franchise. The women's wings of political parties possessed very little functional relevance.

### **The Post-Colonial Period**

During this period, Nigerian women began to play very active roles in various aspects of the nation's development and assumed a more critical role in traditional agriculture. Particularly as a result of exodus of able bodied men to wage labour; Nigerian women took over an increasing portion of the burden of food production, contributing between 50 to 70 per cent of Nigeria's food requirements (Effah, 2017). While the situation in the public sector remained unsatisfactory, it was markedly different from what had obtained during the pre-colonial and colonial times. Five years after independence, only 6.9 per cent of the salaried workforce was women; by 1970, 8.7 per cent of the total number of established staff in the Federal Civil Service was women. In 1980, the percentage of women had risen to 12.6 per cent. Similar were maintained in State Civil Services. In 1979, women constituted 49 per cent of agricultural manpower in Nigeria, 1.4 per cent of artisans and craftsmen, and 1.6 per cent of the professional/sub-professional group. It was only in the medical sector that women constituted 84.3 per cent of dieticians and 80.2 per cent of nurses.

The position of women in education in post colonial Nigeria has not improved much. According to the Population Reference Bureau, in 1981, only 6 per cent of adult Nigerian women were literate. By 1979, 72.9 per cent of urban girls and 80.08 per cent of rural girls were not attending school. University admission figures also reflect a low percentage of female entries in the new era. Successive postcolonial governments have encouraged female education and expanded educational facilities for girls. In spite of these efforts, however, the impact on women is still low. Some of the factors that militate against women's education in the country include the perception that women needed to be educated only to be good housewives and the high dropout rate amongst women.

According to Stilfire (2014) economic recession since the mid 1980s has also affected women's education in Nigeria. As a result of increasing cost of education, most parents, especially in the rural areas, prefer withdrawing girls from school, instead of boys. To stem this tide, some State governments passed edicts granting free education to girls up to secondary school levels, in other states, women with children are allowed to attend school and it is considered an offence to withdraw a female child from school before a stipulated age. Early marriages by girls are frowned upon by many states and women's organizations. Women's education unit was established at the Federal Ministry of Education to encourage women education. Subsequently, all State ministries of Education did same.

The colonial era placed many obstacles on the way of women's self advancement and

participation in national development. For instance, married women had to obtain their husband's written permission to obtain international passports. Until very recently, women were not allowed to stand bail for a suspect. The statutory provisions still do not favour women in many respects, including divorce and inheritance. The role of women in Nigeria's post 1960 politics has not been reflected sufficiently, in terms of appointments to policy making posts. In spite of massive support given to various political parties by women, women organizations, market women movements etc., until recently, very few women benefited from political patronage.

In Southern Nigeria, women already had the franchise by 1960; thus in 1960, Mrs. Wuraola Esan from Western Nigeria became the first female member of the Federal Parliament. In 1961, Chief (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo contested elections in Aba Urban North constituency under the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) platform and won, became a member of the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly until 1966; Mrs. Janet N. Mokelu and Miss Ekpo A. Young also contested elections, won and became members of the Eastern House of Assembly. In northern Nigeria, however, women were still denied the franchise even after independence. As a result, prominent female politicians like Hajia Gambo Sawaba in the North could not vote and be voted for. It was only in 1979 that women in northern Nigeria were given the franchise, following the return to civilian rule (Chioma, 2010).

During the Second Republic (1979 - 1983), there was further progress according to Chioma (2010) a few Nigerian women won

elections into the House of Representatives at the national level. Some of these women were Mrs. J. C. Eze of the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) who represented Uzo Uwani constituency in former Anambra State, Mrs V.O. Nnaji, also of NPP who represented Isu and Mrs Abiola Babatope of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) who represented Mushin Central II of Lagos State. But, on the whole, very few women won elections into the State Houses of Assembly during the Second Republic. During the same period, only two women were appointed Federal ministers. They were Chief (Mrs) Janet Akinrinade who was Minister for Internal Affairs and Mrs Adenike Ebun Oyagbola, Minister for National Planning. Mrs Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel was the only female Permanent Secretary (first in the Federal Ministry of Establishment and later Federal Ministry of Health). A number of women were appointed Commissioners in some states. In 1983, Ms Franca Afegbua became the only woman to be elected into the Senate. Also, very few women contested and won elections into the Local Government Councils during this time.

With the return of military rule in December 1983, the first formal quota system was introduced by the Federal Government as regards the appointment of women into governance. The Buhari administration directed that at least one female must be appointed a member of the Executive Council in every state. All the states complied with this directive; some states even had two or three female members. In the early 1990s, two women were appointed Deputy Governors. These were Alhaja Latifat Okunu of Lagos State and Mrs Pamela Sadauki of Kaduna State. Chief (Mrs) D.B.A. Kuforiji Olubi served

as Chairperson of a Bank, i.e. the United Bank for Africa PLC. later on, Dr Simi Johnson and Eniola Fadayomi served as Chairpersons of Afribank International Nigeria and Allied Bank Nigeria PLC, respectively. There was, however, no female minister. There was also, no female member of the defunct Supreme Military Council or the later Armed Forces Ruling Council.

In the 1990 elections into local governments heralding the Third Republic, very few women emerged as councillors and only one woman, Chief (Mrs) Titilayo Ajanaku, emerged as Chairperson of a Local Government Council in the West. During the gubernatorial elections, no female governor emerged in any of the states. Only two female Deputy Governors emerged, namely: Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu of Lagos State and Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong of Cross River State. In the Senatorial election held in 1992, Mrs. Kofo Bucknor Akerele was the only woman who won a seat in the Senate. Very few women won election into the House of representatives. One of these few was Chief (Mrs) Florence Ita Giwa who won in the Calabar Constituency under the banner of the National Republican Convention (NRC). Amongst the members of the Transitional Council appointed by President Babangida in January 1993, only two were women, namely Mrs. Emily Aiklmhokuède and Mrs. Laraba Dagash.

In the Interim National Government of Chief Ernest Shonekan, two female ministers were appointed into the cabinet. General Abacha had a number of female ministers at various times in his cabinet, including Chief (Mrs) Onikepo Akande and Ambassador Judith Attah.

During the military regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar, there were two women in the Federal Executive Council: Chief (Mrs) Onikepo Akande (Minister for Commerce) and Dr. Laraba Gambo Abdullahi (Minister of Women Affairs). In the Fourth Republic which started on May 29, 1999, the Nigerian political terrain has witnessed an increase in the number of women political appointees, even though women did not perform well at the elections. In the elections held before May 29, 1999, few women emerged as chairpersons of local government councils. A number of women won elections as councillors. There was no female Governor in any State of the Federation. Only Lagos State produced a female Deputy Governor in the person of Senator Bucknor Akerele.

In the National Assembly, there were only three women in the Senate, namely: Chief (Mrs) Florence Ita Giwa representing Cross River State South Senatorial District; Mrs Stella Omu from Delta State and Hajiya Khairat Abdul-Razaq (now Hajiya Gwadabe) representing the Federal Capital Territory. There were only 12 women in the House of Representatives and these are: Barrister Iquo Minimah, Mrs. Patience Ogodo, Lola Abiola Edewor, Patricia O. Etteh, Dorcas Odujinrin, J.F. Adeyemi, Binta Garba Koji, Gbenni Saraki, Florence Aya, Linda Ikpeazu, Temi Harrinnan and Mercy Almona Isei. In the State Houses of Assembly very few women emerged as members. While in some states, one or two women emerged in the Houses, most other states have virtually no females in their legislatures. States like Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Lagos and many others do not have female members in their State Legislatures. Women have been appointed



as Commissioners and therefore members of the Executive Councils in all the states, but while some states have one female, others have two females in the Executive Councils. President Olusegun Obasanjo has appointed a number of women into the Federal Executive Council. They were Dr. (Mrs) Kema Chikwe (Minister of Transport), Mrs. Dupe Adelaja (Minister of State Defence), Dr. (Mrs) Bekky Ketebugwe (Minister of State, Ministry of Solid Minerals), Dr. (Mrs) Amina Ndalolo (Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Health), Mrs. Pauline Tallen (Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology), and Hajia Aishatu Ismaila (Minister of Women Affairs). Chief (Mrs)

Titilayo Ajanaku was the Special Adviser to the President on Women Affairs.

From the foregoing, it is evident that only very few Nigerian women have participated and emerged in Nigeria's political landscape, in spite of the pioneering efforts of women like Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Margaret Ekpo since the 1950s. Today, the number of women in top jobs is still nearly insignificant (Betty, 2012). In Adamawa State, no woman ever contested for the governorship seat and none has ever emerged as the speaker in the house of assembly. Several women commissioners have been appointed by several administrations from 1999 to date.

**Table 2: Ministers / Elective Positions (1999 – 2015)**

S/no	Office	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015
1.	President	0	0	0	0	0
2.	Vice President	0	0	0	0	0
3.	Ministers	1	3	5	11	7
4.	Senate	3	4	8	7	8
5.	House of Reps.	12	21	23	26	19
6.	Governor	0	0	0	0	0
7.	Deputy Governor	1	2	6	3	4
8.	State House of Assembly	12	38	52	62	46

Source: Nse, (2015).

### **Review of women organization**

The pace of government achievement of the development agenda has been rather too slow and most of the development projects have been put in place in urban areas to satisfy the increasing population in these areas. Because of the obvious slow rate at which communities are developing, several attempts have been made by government to encourage individuals and voluntary

organizations in carrying out community development at rural levels. In line with such initiative, government has instituted programmes like Family Support Programmes, and has also stimulated the formation of Community Development Committees (CDCs, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to save human beings from living in abject poverty

and deplorable living conditions. These put together strengthen the existence and development of women development associations whose role in development cannot be over emphasized.

According to Winakin (1998), women organization is an association of women who have come together for their own interest and that of their community. Women organization can be found in different levels or areas across the world. It can be found in the villages, towns or at the state and national levels. There are numerous existing woman organizations that contributed effectively in terms of development. According to Okonafua (1997), we have uncountable women organization, both local, national and international based.

### **The contribution of women organization in community development**

Women Organizations have contributed greatly to achieving sustainable development, promoting development and encouraging progress, which helped in reducing poverty (Ajadi, *et al.*, 2010) It was discovered that there was a remarkable high involvement rate of women organizations in the provision of infrastructural amenities as renovation/furnishing of town halls/equipment of village schools and churches, and provision of communal environmental sanitation services. Other development programmes in Nigeria include those aimed at economic and educational empowerment of women and community youths such as; provision of grants/loans for enterprise development of women award of scholarships to children of the community awareness creation on HIV/AIDS family health and child care

programmes and other general health matters. Ajadi *et al.* (2010) further stressed that the impact of Women's Organization goes much further than the immediate benefit to their direct service users. WSN (2010), states that women's centers are invariably at the heart of community development initiative within their communities such as economic and physical regeneration project as well as their participation on "a wider range of advisory bodies and partnerships"

In this regard, any community development programme which does not involve women organizations / groups cannot be successful or be of any significant effect because of the importance of their potentials. Schaarticles (2014), indicated that the best and perhaps the only way to achieve sustainable rural development in Africa is to orientate it towards the people living in the rural areas, working with their full participation and focusing on the process and the unique attributes of women. In order words, rural women have an important role to play in the sustenance and sustainability of family and the rural economy. Nwankwo (2010) and Bawa *et al.* (2010), posited that in Africa, a large number of the populations are dependent on agriculture. Thus, stressed that women contribute consistently and considerably to the family's sustenance. Women's fundamental contributions to the household food production and national economics are increasingly acknowledged within Africa and by the international community. In Africa, women's own energetic efforts to organize, and articulate their concerns and make their voices heard through their organizations. These are some examples of women organization in Nigeria.

For the past decades, women have been major participants in community and agricultural development (Bawa *et al.* (2010). In the 1960s and 70s community women Organization advocated for control of local services and neighborhood preservation. In the 1980s, they were among the few forces pursuing neighborhood preservation in the face of uncontrolled downtown growth. Religious congregations, particularly those formed by women have been an integral part of community development during the same period and its connection has clearly been a factor in attracting talented women to the field. Hundred of community development organization began life in faith basement while national councils and local congregation have supplied services and on-going support. This spiritual dimension is usually among current social reform initiative. The faith-based legacy, stressing a holistic view of community revitalizing, is compatible with the approach many women embrace. The willingness of faith based grass roots groups to accept women as leaders offers a valuable proving ground that many women have gone to apply those lessons, and the resources of their organization to strengthen their communities. According to Agency for International Development (AFID) (1974), these organizations have always defined community development issues as those responding directly to the needs of women, children, and families, even in the absence of funding for such broader concerns. Foundation and governments have only recently begun to recognize the wisdom of the approach. The current emphasis in public policy initiative and foundations funding on comprehensive community

initiative (CCIs) affirms the long term commitment of many Women-Led organizations and the role women play as catalyst for social changes. Women build social capital through leadership, community participation, and network. There is a continuum of women's leadership styles ranging from an inclusive, collective, "feminist" model to a more traditional- hierarchical model. As in previous gender specific research in other fields, women community development leaders describe themselves as open, consultative and supportive both in the community and within their organizations they are committed to participation process, and internal democracy.

Women's organization by contributions first and foremost to community development by providing life changing opportunities to women across the full range of ethnic and religious backgrounds, ages, sexual orientation, abilities and educational levels. With the main objectives of social, economic, cultural, religious and political needs of their members and those who are less privilege in the society. The impact of women organization goes much further than the immediate benefit to their direct service users. For example, Wireless Society Networks (WSN, 2010), states that women's centers are invariably at the heart of community development initiative within their communities such as economic and physical regeneration project as well as their participation on "a wider range of advisory bodies and partnerships".

With or without government involvement, women organizations involve in an innovative project aimed at promoting the

living condition of individuals in their communities. They set up training center in the community for male and female drop-outs and those who cannot do agricultural work are given the opportunity to become self-dependent. They teach woodwork, carpentry, tailoring, hair dressing, electrical work and mechanics. However, in the past, it was evident that women's activities were inhibited by formal organizations which tend to be dominated by men. The emergence of the involvement of women groups in community based information production and child care, gives opportunity to associate with each other and articulate their concern, develop new skills and finally manage their activities.

Finally, in their bid to contribute to the development of their community women

groups embark on praying for peace in time of war. They embark on praying and fasting, they became prayer warriors' in the fight against sickness and death in their families and in the community. Robinson (2006) observed that women contribution in community development have improved in recent years and the number has continued to improve. He pointed out that women, considering their passionate nature, are in the best position to effectively carry out community development initiatives. Robinson (2006) categorically stated that in areas where men have failed to deliver the goods to the people in the community, women had succeeded, especially in the area of providing succor to the motherless children as well as the disabled or physically challenged citizens in the society.

**Table 3:** Leading Women Organizations in Nigeria, roles / activities to Community:

S/No	Name of Organization	Roles / Activities
1.	AWF Awesome Treasures Foundation	It is a faith-based organization supporting the overall growth and development of women leaders in Nigeria. Well known for its Woman of Purpose summit, Awesome Treasures connects women with one another and helps them to find their purpose.
2.	AWP Network: African Women Power Network	Helping women farmers on their entrepreneurial skills, increase farming productivity, and household income. The AWP Network also launched the DREAM project – a pitch competition for secondary school students in Lagos state.
3.	DAWN: Diaspora African Women's Network	supports talented women and girls of the African diaspora focused on African affairs.
4.	FIN: Female Information Network	serves as a means for Nigerian women to express the complexities of their shared struggles and very powerful platform to investigate the disappearance of Charity Aiyedogbon a woman who went missing May 2016.
5.	KN: KIND Nigeria	Promotes leadership development for young women and aims to remove barriers to women's public participation and seeks to end violence against women.
6.	MRCC: Mirabel Rape Crisis Center	The organization supports victims of rape and sexual assault and provides survivors of sexual

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| 7.  | MI: Moremi Initiative:                              | violence an opportunity to gain access to free forensic, medical, legal and counseling services. Provides leadership development training to young African women and offers mentoring, research and advocacy support.  |
| 8.  | NWF: Nigerian Women Fund:                           | Helps to increase the representation of women in governance and seeks to address the growing concerns of gender imbalance in elective and appointive positions.  |
| 9.  | STER Nigeria: Stands To End Rapes                   | A youth-led organization working to end all forms of sexual violence and abuse through education and advocacy; while providing prevention mechanisms and psychosocial support services for survivors.  |
| 10. | SLA: She Leads Africa:                              | Shines the spotlight on women driving Africa's growth through leadership, commerce and innovation. At this event, participants compete for \$15,000 in cash prizes, media features in international news outlets, and exclusive meetings with top investors. |
| 11. | WAAWF: Working To Advance African Women Foundation: | Empowers girls throughout Africa by increasing the pipeline of girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields.   |
| 12. | WF: Wellbeing Foundation:                           | Wellbeing Foundation: educates women on maternal, newborn and child health information. Known for its hash tag #MaternalMonday, and empower women and improve access to quality health services and health outcomes.   |
| 13. | WiMBiz: Women in Management Business Public Service | The organization focuses on leadership capacity building and networking for growth and women in senior positions at corporate organization and on boards.  |
| 14  | WITIN: Women in Technology in Nigeria               | They organizes educate, inspire women and girls to pursue and retain careers in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics.  |
| 15. | WTEC: Women's Technology Empowerment Center         | Encourage Nigerian girls to use technology to empower themselves socially. The organization prides itself in introducing young girls to technology and helping to develop their bright minds.  |
| 16. | WOWE: Women of West Africa Entrepreneurship         | Organizes Women's Entrepreneurship Day for Women in Nigeria.   |
| 17  | NAOWA: Nigeria Army Officers' Wives Association     | Provision of community health Centres, schools and carefully designed welfare programmes that are targeted at women, youth and the less privilege.   |
| 18. | NAFOWA: Nigeria Air Force Officer Wives Association | Make impacts on welfares of Women, Children and Needy in the community.  |
| 19. | POWA: Police Officer Wives Association              | Support widows of Police officers, women and Children.   |
| 20. | GS :Girls Scouts                                    | Made impacts in the lives of girls/women in the society developing their values.   |
| 21. | DUF: De Frends Fadamer User                         | Encourages women to go into farming business.  |
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22.	NOWA: Navy Officer Wives Association	Their focus are more their Families and encouraging the Navy's officers wives.
23.	AWC: Association for Women in Communication	The association is a professional organization that champions the advancement of women across all communication discipline by recognizing excellence, promoting leadership and positioning its members at the forefront of the evolving communication era.
24.	CWBR Centre for Women Business Research	The centre provides knowledge about women business owners and their enterprises worldwide. It provides original, ground breaking research to document the economic and social contribution of women owned firms and consulting and public relation services to maximize the benefit of this knowledge
25.	NAWBO: National Association of Women Owners	It propels women entrepreneurs into economic, social and political systems of power worldwide by strengthening the wealth creating capacity of its members and promoting economic development within the entrepreneurial community.
26	YWCA: Young Women Christian Association	It is one of the oldest multicultural women's organization in the world. Their mission is to empower women.

Source: Mary, 2016

**Table 4;** Some Women Organisation contribution to the development of the Community

S/No	Name of Organisation	Contributions
1.	NAFOWA: Nigeria Air Force Officer Wives Association	Distributed Relief materials worth eleven millions of naira in Bama IDP camp in 2016. Source: Sundata post, 2016.
2.	POWA: Police Officer Wives Association	Distributed food stuffs and other items to support widows of Police officers in 2016. Donations to victims of the Nyanya's bomb blasts in Abuja in 2014 Source: Poanigeria, 2014
3.	FIN: Female Information Network	Investigation of the disappearance of Charity Aiyedogbon a woman who went missing May 2016. Source: Mary, 2016
4.	DUF: De Friends Fadamer User	Distributed sanitary towels, Bath soaps and bath slippers to 100 inmates in ganye 2012. Yidau, 2012
5.	NOWA: Navy Officer Wives Association	Built daycare centers, nursery and primary schools at Port Calabar and in to Partnership with new 2Horizon in ICT. The organization Constructed new Hotel at NOWA secondary school, Offa. Source: Cross River Watch, 2015
6.	NAOWA: Nigeria Army Officers' Wives Association	Provision of community health centres, schools and carefully designed welfare programmes that are targeted at women, youth and the less privilege across states in Nigeria Source: Sundata Post, 2016

## **Constraints Associated with Participation of Women Organizations in Community Development**

Women organizations also faced a lot of challenges in its activities, this include among others;

(1) In adequate Funds: Women organizations lack funds for day-to-day running of their organizational activities. This lead to the abandonment of some projects limiting their ability to contribute to the extent they should have being contributing to the development of their communities.

(2) Embezzlement of scare resources (funds): This is one of the problems facing various women organization. This problem is more dishearten when the first contribution is not accounted for, due to mismanagement of funds. This disrupts the interest of people. Some projects have been suspended as a result of public embezzlement of funds. Because when the first attempt is not well accounted for, people tend to withdraw their contribution to such development or project

(3) Illiteracy: The inability of many women to pursue education has passed a lot of problem in their contribution to the development of their communities.

(4) Limited access to political network: Women Groups do not feel they have adequate access to political leaders, corporate executives and other powerful groups that generally consist of men-women's access.

(5) Disunity: As it is well known, there cannot be any meaningful development in the presence of disunity. No wonder it is said "can two work together, except they agree". This issue hinders the contribution of the women groups to community development

process. This is because, where there is disunity, the period of gathering together may be defeated. People have different opinions and read meanings into any suggestion made by the others.

## **Summary**

The study examined the contribution of women organization in community development efforts in Nigeria. In a wider scope it can be seen as a process whereby government organizations voluntary association or public promise partnership including women organization to ameliorate adversities in a community's economic, political, social, physical environment and to prevent future adversities. According to Wnaku (1998), women organization is an association of women who have come together for their own interest and that of their community. Women organization can be found in different levels or areas across the world. It can be found in the villages, towns or at the state and national levels. Women Organizations have contributed greatly to achieving sustainable development, promoting development and encouraging progress, which will help reduce or eliminate poverty (Ajadi, *et al.* 2010) It was discovered that there was a remarkable high involvement rate of women organisations in the provision of infrastructural amenities as renovation/furnishing of town halls/equipment of village schools and churches, and provision of communal environmental sanitation services. Other development programmes include those aimed at economic and educational empowerment of women and community youths such as; provision of grants/loans for enterprise development of women award of scholarships to children of the

community, awareness creation on HIV/AIDS, family health and child care programmes, and other general health matters, the impact of Women's Organization goes much further than the immediate benefit to their direct service users (Ajadi, *et al.* 2010). WSN (2010) women's centers are invariably at the heart of community development initiative within their communities such as economic and physical regeneration project as well as their participation on "a wider range of advisory bodies and partnerships"

In this regard, any community development programme which does not involve women organizations /groups cannot be successful or be of any significant effect because of the importance of their potentials. In order words, rural women have an important role to play in the sustenance and sustainability of family and the rural economy.

## CONCLUSION

There was a remarkable high involvement rate of women organization in the provision of infrastructures amenities as constructions and renovations/furnishing of schools, health centres, visitations to hospitals, Internal Displaced persons (IDPs) camps and prisons, environmental sanitations services. Other includes aimed at economic empowerment, education targeting women and children, raising role models provision of grants for enterprises, awards of scholarships and other good health matters. This paper concludes that, women organizations have contributed significantly in community development and to the national economy at large.

## Recommendations

In order for women to achieve greater participation in community development, it is recommended that:

1. Among other things existing women organizations in the Nigeria should be encouraged by way of adequate recognition, training and funding (partnership) by the government.
2. Networking or resource sharing should be encouraged among NGOs. An NGO cannot provide everything; they should collaborate with other information providers like special, academic and public libraries to get timely and accurate information to the community.
3. NGOs should expand its services in rural areas to facilitate poor women in village because rural women are the ones who are vulnerable to poverty, economic exclusion, and unemployment, uneducated and having no collateral.
4. Higher financial empowerment could be done by assisting women association in the form of subsidized loans so that there could be greater investment in the areas of deficiency.
5. They should be trained on political awareness as there seems to be political apathy among the womenfolk.
6. Most members of the women voluntary organizations are not well educated and therefore require adult education to improve on their educational standard.





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