Women and Poverty Alleviation in Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract
A nation’s population is usually almost divided evenly between males and females however; the sharing of power, wealth, influence, employment etc. has never been close to equality. Poverty has a woman face since 70% of people in poverty are women. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals that involve halving extreme poverty has the target date as 2015. The study assesses effort at women empowerment and poverty alleviation in Lagos. The study employed primary and secondary data which were obtained through the administration of structured questionnaire and the revision of exiting relevant literature, respectively. Data was collected from 180 respondents across six centres in Lagos. The study found that the women poverty alleviation programme is working towards the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Lagos. The programme has contributed immensely towards alleviating poverty by financially empowering the women. However some of its contributions have not had the desired impact due to internal and external constraints including: inadequate and untimely release of funds by the government; inadequate/inappropriate staffing; inability to monitor the impact cum performance of beneficiaries due to logistics problems; massive unemployment among women. The study recommends that institutional arrangements to enhance the status of women and increase their access to education should be strengthened.

Keywords: women, poverty, alleviation, development, empowerment.

1. Introduction
Poverty eradication dominates the International Development Agenda of the 21st century. The improvement of the health and living conditions of millions around the world is a primary concern of the current Millennium Development Goals for reducing poverty. Poverty refers to a situation and process of serious deprivation or lack of resources and materials necessary for living within a minimum standard conducive to human dignity and well-being. Poverty connotes deprivation of the means of subsistence. The manifestations of poverty include inadequate distribution of resources, lack of access to basic social services like education and health, food scarcity, low life expectancy, and lack of participation in decision making processes. Analysis of the social aspects of poverty links conditions of scarcity to aspects of the distribution of resources and power in a society and recognizes that poverty may be a function of the diminished "capability" of people to live the kinds of lives they value. The social aspects of poverty may include lack of access to information, education, health care, or political power. Poverty may also be understood as an aspect of unequal social status and inequitable social relationships, experienced as exclusion, dependency, and diminished capacity to participate, or to develop meaningful connections with other people in society. This paper views poverty as deprivation of common necessities that determine the quality of life, which include food, clothing, shelter and safe drinking water, and may also include the deprivation of opportunities to learn, to obtain better employment, to escape poverty and/or to enjoy the respect of fellow citizens. Up till the 1980s poverty was largely associated with the rural areas in developing countries; but the situation has changed with the dramatic increase in the level of poverty. The United Nations 2002 report defines extreme poverty as "poverty that kills", depriving individuals of the means to stay alive in the face of hunger, disease and environmental hazards. Moore (2007) substantiates this that extreme poverty implies living on less than 1 dollar per day, and moderate poverty
as living on less than $2 a day. The proportion of the developing world's population living in extreme economic poverty fell from 28 per cent in 1990 to 21 per cent in 2001. Looking at the period between 1981-2001, the percentage of the world's population living on less than $1 per day has halved. The International Labour Organization ILO Reports (2004) observes that while the total number of people worldwide living on less than $1 a day declined from 1.45 billion to 1.1 billion, between 1981 and 2001, mainly as a result of the rapid economic growth in China and other countries in Asia, the number in Sub-Saharan Africa increased from 164 million to 314 million. Of this total, some 155 million are women and men of working age. The World Development Reports (2001) indicate that Africa has the largest number of working poor in total employment of any region. The report further estimates that around 55 per cent of all people employed in Sub-Saharan Africa do not earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the $1 a day poverty line and that about 80 per cent are subsisting on under $2 a day. These proportions have changed very little over the last few years. The Economic Committee of Africa ECA (2006) adds that even in those countries that have seen significant economic growth, such growth has not had an apparent impact on poverty and only a few countries in the region are likely to achieve the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving extreme poverty by 2015.

Nigeria is a country endowed with abundant natural and human resources with a landed area of 923,768 square kilometers, rich agricultural land and a population of about 150 million going by the 2006 National Census. Nigeria as a country shares land boardser with the Republic of Benin in the West, Chad and Cameroon in the East, and Niger in the North. The World Development Indicators puts the population growth (annual %) at 2.4 while the GNI (current US$) is 100.7 billion. The GNI per capita, atlas method (current US$) is 620.00. The Federal Capital was formerly situated in Lagos. Lagos is the most populated city in Nigeria, while Nigeria is the most populous country in sub Saharan Africa and is also termed the ninth most populous country in the world. Though Nigeria is endowed with abundant natural and human resources a lot of people live below the poverty line and there are disparities between the rich and the poor. Nigeria is poor due to mismanagement of resources. While Nigeria has the potentials to be a rich country due to all these resources, it is a poor country. The per capita income of Nigeria dropped from $1000 in 1985 to $275 in 1997 and to $75 in 2007. The country has a high unemployment rate. A nation’s population is usually almost divided evenly between males and females except under peculiar circumstances such as war or highly selective immigration which normally affect males more than females. However, throughout the ages, the sharing of power, wealth, influence, employment etc., between men and women has never been close to equality. Even in the most advanced countries, gender inequality in wealth distribution has remained a live issue. Over the years, many women are faced with the daunting challenges of joblessness, no source of livelihood, widowhood, and single parenthood. These challenges notwithstanding, the roles played by women in national development and in all facets of human endeavours have been quite notable. Though there has been considerable progress in developing the capabilities of women, their participation in economic and political decision making remains very limited. The UNDP, in its Human Development Report in 2005 listed some examples to show that in spite of the considerable progress in developing women’s capacities, women and men still live in an unequal world. The examples include the following: poverty has a woman face, because 70 percent of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty are women: the increasing poverty among women arises from their unequal situation in the labour market, their status and power in the family etc.; women’s labour force participation rose by just 4 percent in 20 years (from 36 percent in 1980 to 40 percent in 2000); women have relatively low access to credit from formal banking institutions because they mostly do not have collateralers to offer; all regions record a higher rate of unemployment among women than men; among illiterate people in developing countries, the proportion of women is higher than men’s; women’s wages are below average. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report adds that in 55 countries with comparable data, the average female wage is three quarters (¾) of the male wage in the non-agricultural sector. In developing countries, women still constitute less than one-seventh (1/7) of
administrators and managers. Women occupy only 10 percent of parliamentary seats and only 6 percent of cabinet positions. Women development is the process whereby women develop the capacity and the ability to control and direct those things which affect them. Alleviating poverty among women and putting them on a good footing will enhance the proper upbringing of their children as well as financially empowering them. The status of women often changes when financial impoverishment disappears. When women become economically empowered, they can carry out activities that demonstrate financial independence, they can develop the capacity to take decisions. The situations of women in certain areas of activities in many developing countries seem to have deteriorated relative to that of men. Two of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have to do with eradicating extreme poverty and hunger as well as promoting gender equality and empowering women. Countries that invest in promoting the social and economic status of women tend to have lower poverty rates. For example, an extra year of secondary schooling for girls can increase their future wages by 10 to 20%. In 2006, 51% of all assistance to the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank’s fund for the poorest countries, included gender in project operations. In 2007 the World Bank launched the Gender Action Plan (GAP) to focus on gender in the land, labour, agriculture, finance, and infrastructure sectors. Putting resources into the hands of poor women results in large development payoffs and also promote gender equality in the household and in society. Expanding women’s opportunities in public works, agriculture, finance, and other sectors accelerates economic growth, helping to mitigate the effects of current and future financial crises.

Poverty is a threat that no country disregards because of its effects on human development. Poverty remains a major hindrance to human development worldwide especially in developing countries such as Nigeria. Poverty is a source of worry because of its resultant effects. While poverty affects both men and women, women tend to be more vulnerable to poverty owing to cultural attributes that have had negative stereotypes on women. Concerned groups such as Non-Governmental Organizations, the government, Women Activists and private individuals have made significant efforts to reduce poverty especially among women, but the problem still persists. Women have low incomes, low education, do not own land, have constraints in accessing health facilities, they depend on subsistence farming but do not determine and control sales, and do not make their life choices. Unpleasant experiences that women face affect their lives, their children and other members of the household. Poverty prevents some women from enjoying their life privileges like education, access to health facilities, participation in politics and ability to control resources.

2. Statement of the Problem
There are several factors that hinder women’s empowerment and poverty alleviation. They include poverty, low levels of education, poor job opportunities, discrimination, socio-cultural barriers etc. This study examines the efforts that have been made in Lagos, Nigeria’s commercial nerve centre and the most populous city in the country to reduce poverty among the women to ascertain the potency of programmes for poverty reduction among women and to proffer measures for enhancement and sustainability of women empowerment and poverty alleviation programmes.

3. The Objectives
The general objective of this research is to assess women poverty alleviation and empowerment activities in Lagos Nigeria. The specific objective of the study include: (i) to examine the poverty alleviation strategies adopted so far in empowering women. (ii) to assess the achievements of poverty alleviation and women empowerment. (iii) to highlight some of the problems in poverty alleviation and women empowerment. (iv) to make recommendations on how to resolve the identified problems.
4. Literature

4.1 Concept of Poverty

Poverty refers to a situation and process of serious deprivation or lack of resources and materials necessary for living within a minimum standard conducive to human dignity and well-being. Poverty connotes deprivation of the means of subsistence. There are several concepts of what poverty is. For instance, the Yorubas of Nigeria say ‘if hunger is out of poverty, poverty is virtually ended.’ To them therefore poverty is mainly not having food to eat. To others such as Townsend (1992) poverty is seen in terms of per capita income, per capita energy consumption, starchy staples as a percentage of calories consumed, life expectancy, infant mortality, and the number of inhabitants per physician. Others think of poverty as a physical matter and the poor as people with limited and insufficient food, clothing, crowded, cold and dirty shelter, and whose lives are consequently painful and short. These various implications of poverty indicate that there are many dimensions to poverty but they all point in one direction—poverty relates to the quality of life that a person can enjoy and this quality of life has a minimum. No matter how this quality of life is defined it includes food, shelter and living conditions, clothing and access to basic social amenities like education, medical services, good water supply, good roads, clean environment etc. Some of this quality of life could be quantified in monetary terms and expressed as either incomes or expenditure of the consumer but there are parts of it that cannot be expressed in monetary terms. Whether quantifiable in monetary terms or not, the quality of life implies a standard of living. Bearing in mind the various things that constitute a good standard of living, poverty can be defined as the inability of a person to attain a specified minimum standard of living. That minimum standard of living is usually defined in terms of per capita income, or better still in terms of per capita consumption or expenditure. Anybody whose income or consumption falls below that specified minimum income is considered poor. The specified minimum income is referred to as ‘the poverty line.’ In any society those who are likely to fall below the poverty line consist mostly of the unemployed, those in low paying jobs, the self-employed especially those in the informal sector, women particularly women heads of households with children, the aged, children, recent migrants and destitutes. Poverty may also include the deprivation of opportunities to learn, to obtain better employment to escape poverty and/or to enjoy the respect of fellow citizens. It may also be understood as an aspect of unequal social status and inequitable social relationships, experienced as exclusion, dependency, and diminished capacity to participate, or to develop meaningful connections with other people in society. Some people take poverty to involve subjective and comparative terms while others take it to be moral and evaluative. Defining poverty involves the question of whether it is mainly about material needs involving measuring consumption by using income as the main determinant factor, or a much broader set of needs that includes factors of wellbeing. The 1st Millennium Development Goal (MDG) is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The World Bank defined poverty as the state of living on less than $2 a day and according to the World Bank 2008/2009 report poverty continues to remain elusive to eradicate even for the billion in question. This has become an issue of concern both at the local and international levels since the MDG’s were established.

4.2 Measurement of Poverty

Poverty is usually measured as either absolute or relative poverty, the latter being actually an index of income inequality. Absolute poverty refers to a set standard which is consistent over time and between countries. The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than US $1.25 (PPP) per day, and moderate poverty as less than $2 a day however, a person or family with access to subsistence resources, e.g. subsistence farmers, may have a low cash income without a correspondingly low standard of living since they do not living on their cash income but using it as a top up. The World Bank estimates that in 2001, 1.1 billion people had consumption levels below $1 a day and 2.7 billion lived on less than $2 a day. A dollar a day, in nations that do not use the dollar as currency, does not translate to living a day on
the amount of local currency as determined by the exchange rate. Rather, it is determined by the purchasing power parity, which would look at how much local currency is needed to buy the same things that a dollar could buy in the United States. Usually, this would translate to less local currency than the exchange rate in poorer countries as the United States is a more expensive country. Relative poverty views poverty as socially defined and dependent on social context, hence relative poverty is a measure of income inequality. Usually, relative poverty is measured as the percentage of population with income less than some fixed proportion of median income. As Michael (2009) observes relative poverty measures are used as official poverty rates in several developed countries. As such these poverty statistics measure inequality rather than material deprivation or hardship. The measurements are usually based on a person's yearly income and frequently take no account of total wealth. The main poverty line used in the OECD and the European Union is based on "economic distance", a level of income set at 60% of the median household income. David (2001) adds that the World Bank's Voices of the Poor, based on research with over 20,000 poor people in 23 countries, identifies a range of factors which poor people identify as part of poverty. These include: precarious livelihoods, excluded locations, physical limitations, gender relationships, problems in social relationships, lack of security, abuse by those in power, dis-empowering institutions, limited capabilities, weak community organizations

Poverty is often classified into three variables, income poverty, vulnerability and empowerment. Income poverty stands for lack of income to afford minimum basic necessities of life. Vulnerability involves the probability of risk today of being in poverty or to fall into deeper poverty in the future. Empowerment is further classified into three categories namely, Economic, Social and Political empowerment. Economic empowerment refers to economic security of oneself. Social empowerment refers to the ability to participate in decision-making in the community including the household and non-family groups. Political empowerment refers to the ability to interact in the public sphere.

4.3 Causes of Poverty

Poverty is a macro problem. The causes are as wide as they are deep also. The World Development Reports (2000/2001) observes that some of the key reasons why people all over the world are poor and remain poor are political instability, natural disasters, corruption, socio-economic disparities and prejudice, lack of access to education, lack of infrastructures or other causes such as acute conditions like warfare. Agricultural cycle is yet another cause of poverty. People that rely on fruits and vegetables that they produce for household food consumption often are faced with cycles of relative abundance of scarcity. The period before harvest is always a hungry period for families that rely on subsistence production for survival. During the scarcity periods, these families lack sufficient resources to meet their minimal nutritional needs. Droughts and flooding can cause poverty as well. Apart from destruction caused by natural events such as hurricanes, environmental forces always cause acute periods of crisis by destroying many crops and animals as well. Adekanye (2006) observes that poverty is by far the most serious of the economic problems of Nigeria and it is evident in the rising cases of unemployment and child labour. There are several dimensions of poverty including low nutritional status, low level of education, and decline in spending on social activities, high percentage of household income spent on food, high infant mortality rate, and low life expectancy among others. The Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) reports that poverty increased significantly during the period of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Ojo (1997) notes that in 1996 the poverty level in Nigeria was put at 65.6% with an estimated population of 102.3 million Nigerians at that time, it means that about 67.1million Nigerians were very poor. Going by present circumstances, poverty in Nigeria has become endemic and every attempt by the government to tackle the menace through improved wages has failed possibly because inflation goes unchecked. With the harsh economic conditions, the mass retrenchment in the public and private sectors and the rising prices of housing, food, and transportation poverty is on increase and may
continue for a long time. The effect of this on the women comprise of the daunting challenges of joblessness, broken homes and poor standard of living. In Nigeria, like in most of the world, the woman is engaged in agriculture, informal income generating activities, health and education, all tasks essential to the survival and sustainability of any society. However, most of the women largely live in poverty. Their personal poverty is a lot more pervading than that of the male and this threatens the very survival and health of the nation. Poverty has a woman face since 70% of people in poverty are women. This is a challenge to sustainable development. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals that involve halving extreme poverty has the target date as 2015. Development derives from the efforts or abilities of man, innate, acquired and or developed to harness the resources of nature using his inventiveness, capital etc. not only for his current sustenance but also for the improvement of his living conditions. It is the process and result of improving the well-being of people - not a category or some categories of people, but all persons within the national economy, the totality of the citizens. The personal poverty of the women is a lot more pervading than that of their male companions. The Nigerian woman therefore has no choice but a life of hard work and low returns and of poor leverage as an interest group. Women contribute significantly to economic and social development and sustainable development is possible only if women are involved. Women must therefore be both participants and beneficiaries of development programmes. The UNDP (1997) summarises the experiences of women worldwide in the statement that women constitute half of the world population, perform two thirds of the hours worked, are registered as only one third of these hours, receive only 10% of the world’s income and have 1% of the world’s property registered in their name. This is a challenge to notions of justice and development. Going by the foregoing experts have advocated that one of the ways to tackle poverty is by the empowerment of women. This is based on the premise that an empowered woman can support her family, ensure her children go to school and contribute to the growth of the nation. Other approaches suggested by experts are the economic growth strategy, and the basic needs fulfillment strategy. Women in Nigeria have always been faced with the daunting challenges of joblessness, no source of livelihood etc. Oppong (2003) groups the roles of the woman into several categories, namely; mother, worker or producer outside the home, worker or producer inside the home (goods and services), wife, kinswoman, community member and individual woman. These roles or the degrees of their performance vary among cultures and from time to time within the same culture. Top on the list are the roles of the woman as mother and as worker or producer both outside the home that is her labour force participation. The seven roles are interdependent as the performance of one diminishes the capacity to perform others. For example, the important role of motherhood is time consuming and automatically affects the capacity to perform other roles. Nigeria has a female population of about 51% and quite a few of them are heads of households being widows, and/or single women. In terms of poverty gender disparities exists, 59% of female-headed households live below the poverty line compared to 41% of male-headed households. The incidence of poverty is much higher in rural areas than in urban areas. The World Bank (2006) observes that inequality runs deep, with the richest 10% of the population holding approximately 50% of the national wealth compared with 50% of the population sharing just 10% of the wealth.

4.4 World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy
The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were established to help in the developing countries. They have implemented some programmes towards the eradication of poverty in some of the developing countries. Such programmes are known as Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSP). The poverty reduction strategy that the World Bank and the IMF has required from the HIPC countries since 1999 is normally described not by its contents but by the process by which the PRSP is elaborated. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) involves five principles. The first is that it must be country driven. The original initiative to start a PRSP should originate from the countries themselves. Second is that it must be result-oriented. The PRSP should try to focus on the effects of the policies rather
than on the policies itself. It should look at the long run effects of the policies on the society, to find out how it is going to positively affect them or otherwise before implementation. Next it should be comprehensive. Based on the concept of poverty as multi-dimensional this principle opines that poverty cannot be reduced, by increasing economic growth alone but with other factors in collaboration. Again it must be partnership-oriented. This includes the various partners of development, from bilateral donors and multilateral institutions, through national governments and parliaments, to domestic and international civil society organizations. Finally it must be long-term. Poverty is a multi-dimension issue, which is not easy to be reduced within a short run. This makes it difficult for the PRSP programmes to be run over a short term but rather must they be consistent over a period of time. There are countries such as Nigeria that have tried to dialogue the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes and its implementation. Some of the programmes have assisted some of the developing countries in their finances and investments. Poverty for some involves a subjective and a comparative term; while for others it is moral and evaluative and some still see it as scientifically based. The background to the PRSP is that Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the World Bank and IMF failed. The programme of SAP began in the 1980’s but the aim of its initiation was not fulfilled. The programme was mainly concerned about economic growth and did not bother much on how poverty should be dealt with or removed entirely. Ojo (1996) observes that figures from the Federal Office of Statistics show that poverty increased significantly during the period of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). By 1996 the poverty level in Nigeria was put at 65.6% with an estimated population of 102.3 million Nigerians at that time, it means that about 67.1 million Nigerian were very poor. According to Yunus (2001) what the poor people want most is not charity but opportunity. If the poor are given charity today and none tomorrow, it does not help in ending their poverty at all. Opportunities granted to them will go a long way in assisting or aiding their businesses thereby ending poverty since they can employ the opportunities for income generating activities and lift themselves also out of poverty.

4.5 Statement of Research Hypotheses
The study tested the following research hypotheses:

H₀: The women and poverty alleviation programme has not significantly alleviated women poverty in Lagos

H₁: The women and poverty alleviation programme has significantly alleviated women poverty in Lagos

H₀: There is no significant relationship between availability of funds and the success of women poverty alleviation programmes.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between availability of funds and the success of women poverty alleviation programmes.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between adequate skills acquisition and poverty alleviation among women.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between adequate skills acquisition and poverty alleviation among women.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between women financial empowerment and poverty alleviation.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between women financial empowerment and poverty alleviation.

5. Methodology
The study was carried out using the descriptive survey research design. This study employed primary and secondary sources. Women Empowerment Potency for Poverty Reduction Questionnaire (WEPPRQ) designed by the researcher was the data-gathering instrument. The questionnaire was distributed to 200 women in Lagos. Of the 200 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 170 (85%) usable copies were returned. Data was also collected from the Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation. The
analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The simple percentage and chi-square statistical tools were used. Focus group interviews were also conducted.

6. Discussion and Data Analysis
6.1 Efforts at Alleviating Poverty among Women
The Nigerian state has responded to the international environment through the adoption of public policies and programmes to redress imbalances in gender differences in the social, economic, and political spheres. Government is increasingly conscious of the crucial roles women have to play towards the development of the nation. In 2000 the National Policy on Women was adopted with the aim of ensuring that the principles and provision of equal rights, obligations and opportunities before the law and non-discrimination against any citizens is enforced. The policy thrust covers equity, social order, social wellbeing, resource allocation, economic growth, efficiency etc. Prior to this the National Commission for Women was established to coordinate machinery for women development programmes. The organization has made modest achievements. Other public programmes have also been initiated in the past to legitimize concerns for the plight of women. Between 1985 and 1993, there was the Better Life Programme which was aimed at assisting rural women and improving their living conditions. There was also the Family Support Programme (FSP) which had component schemes on health, education, agriculture, women in development, child welfare, youth development, disability, destitution, income generation and shelter. The actions of successive government have resulted in a change in the lifestyle of women both in the rural and urban areas. The conditions of women have improved remarkably. Women now own land, have access to credit facilities, and to education and vocational training. Women are now sensitized to their roles and contributions to nation building.

6.2 The Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation Programme (WAPA)
The women affairs and poverty alleviation (WAPA) programme was created for the purpose of elevating the standard of living of women and children through economic empowerment and sustainable programmes that would lead to self-reliance. It is committed to women development and poverty reduction as means of attaining sustainable economic growth. Among the goals is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. The core responsibilities of women affairs and poverty alleviation programme include liaising with women voluntary organizations/international bodies on women programmes, coordinating the activities of women non-governmental organizations, forming and promoting women co-operative societies, women education-vocational and functional training; promoting small scale industries, commercial activities amongst women groups; coordinating ministerial programmes on women databank/information center on women programmes; providing technical assistance on women programmes; training and skills acquisition for women and others in need of special assistance and promoting economic activities of women in rural areas; putting in place income generating programmes for women/promoting arts and craft export; supervising women development centers, managing women development and encouraging solidarity among women groups; as well as providing and managing microcredit schemes for poverty alleviation programmes and job creation/poverty alleviation.

6.3 Strategies adopted by women affairs and poverty alleviation programme.
The alleviation of poverty through women empowerment is a long term project that requires a huge amount of human and material resources. More importantly, it requires a clear cut avenue for channeling these resources so that the objective would be achieved. To actualize this, the programme adopted several strategies such as the introduction of quarterly short term training for grass root women in various local government areas and the establishment of the Lagos State microfinance institution. To reduce poverty and empower the women, the policy of the programme was geared towards the establishment of skills
acquisition centers across the state to promote entrepreneurial skills among the women and to create job opportunities for self-reliance and independence. Over five thousand (5000) students are trained every year in all existing centers in areas like computer education, catering and hotel management, fashion design and dressmaking, refrigeration and air conditioning, maintenance/repair, vulcanizing/ wheel balancing and alignment, screen/transfer printing technology, tile laying/pave lock making, aluminum fabrication, textile design, adult literacy, fishing, smoking, pottery, knitting, welding fabrication photography, hairdressing/barbing and cosmetology etc. The training is certificated and it is tuition free for all ages. Those who excel are empowered with professional tools after graduation through the Lagos State Microfinance Programme, while most of the trainees are usually employed wherever they perform their Industrial Training Programme (ITP). Aside the basic trainings, sundry awareness/enlightenment are also run at the various skills acquisition centres such as entrepreneurial training, workshop for students on quality control, time management, efficient book keeping etc.

6.4 Achievements of the Women Poverty Alleviation Programmes.
The results of the study indicate that there have been short term skills acquisition and training programmes for women. Over 15,000 women were trained and empowered between 1998 and 2011 across the different local council development authorities. There are long term vocation training programmes for young school leavers, drop-outs and unemployed women in the state consequent upon the construction of 9 skills acquisition/vocational training centres. In addition, exiting vocational training centres have been upgraded to accommodate over 300 women annually in non-fee paying training programmes such as fashion designing, hat/textile design, computer education, hairdressing/barbing etc. Furthermore the programmes involve sensitization on gender mainstreaming into governance, provision of grants and subvention for women focus NGOs and women groups annually. Women have also received assistance in developing small scale businesses especially in the rural areas. In addition to the foregoing, kiosks and goods were distributed to empower 3680 unemployed women. Other activities include the provision of extension services in collaboration with the UNDP under the state economic empowerment programme. In general there has been an additional 18% increase in the number of women trained from 2008 and 2010. This has had a positive effect on the rate of unemployment and has also improved the contributions of women to the economy of Lagos State. Day care centres have also increased by 21.1% in 2008 and 26.5% in 2010, allowing mothers to keep their babies in safe places and work and the number of NGOs has also increase by 33.9% which has subsequently led to an increase in awareness, empowering women and educating them on their rights. The state also collaborated with Ministry of Health and trained 132 health workers on sensitization and treatment of Cervical Cancer. To date 33, 000 women have benefited from this treatment, increasing the level of well-being of these women and making them more fit for work and more productive both at home and at work. A total of 16000 women were trained between 1997 and 2010 from the 16 vocational training centres and 12875 (80.47%) of them are gainfully employed and 2459 (19.1%) of the women have established their own trade. A total 45,000 grassroots women benefited from the 6 weeks short term skills training for self-reliance and economic empowerment. From 2007 to 2009, a total of 9248 women were trained with a total of 350 in employment and some have started their own businesses.

6.5 Test of Hypotheses
The study tested four hypotheses and the results are presented below:

Hypothesis 1
H₀: The women and poverty alleviation programme has not significantly alleviated women poverty in Lagos
H₁: The women and poverty alleviation programme has significantly alleviated women poverty in Lagos
Table 1 Effect of Women and Poverty alleviation programme on women poverty alleviation

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\[ X^2 (\text{cal.}) = 16.54, \text{df} = 2. \] \[ X^2 \text{ tab at 0.05 level of significance} = 5.99. \] Since the calculated \( X^2 \) of 16.54 is greater than \( X^2 \) table value, we reject the null hypothesis (\( H_0 \)) and accept the alternative hypothesis (\( H_1 \)). This implies that the women and poverty programme has significantly affected women and poverty alleviation in Lagos. Several thousands of women have benefited from the activities of the programme and this definitely has a positive impact on the lives of the women.

**Hypothesis 2**

- \( H_0 \): There is no significant relationship between availability of funds and the success of women poverty alleviation programmes.
- \( H_1 \): There is a significant relationship between availability of funds and the success of women poverty alleviation programmes.

Table 2 Availability of funds and the success of women poverty alleviation programmes.

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<td>-20</td>
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<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-40</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>26.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>93.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 (\text{cal.}) = 93.34, \text{df} = 2. \] \[ X^2 \text{ tab at 0.05 level of significance} = 5.99. \] Since the calculated \( X^2 \) of 93.34 is greater than \( X^2 \) table value, we reject the null hypothesis (\( H_0 \)) and accept the alternative hypothesis (\( H_1 \)). This implies a significant relationship between funds availability and the success of women poverty alleviation programmes. Adequate and timely release of funds obviously assists in the smooth and efficient running of the programme and so far the programme has succeeded due to the availability of funds.

**Hypothesis 3**

- \( H_0 \): There is no significant relationship between adequate skills acquisition and poverty alleviation among women.
- \( H_1 \): There is a significant relationship between adequate skills acquisition and poverty alleviation among women.

Table 3 Relationship between adequate skills acquisition and poverty alleviation among women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O-E</th>
<th>(O-E)^2</th>
<th>(O-E)^2/E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4225</td>
<td>70.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>8.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-43</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>30.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>109.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 (\text{cal.}) = 109.3, \text{df} = 2. \] \[ X^2 \text{ tab at 0.05 level of significance} = 5.99. \] Since the calculated \( X^2 \) of 109.3 is
greater than $X^2$ table value, we reject the null hypothesis (Ho) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H$_1$). This implies that that there is a significant relationship between adequate skills acquisition and poverty alleviation among women. The acquisition of relevant skills by women increases their independence and ability to provide for themselves and their children.

**Hypothesis 4**

H$_0$: There is no significant relationship between women financial empowerment and poverty alleviation.

H$_1$: There is a significant relationship between women financial empowerment and poverty alleviation.

Table 4 Relationship between women financial empowerment and poverty alleviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O-E</th>
<th>(O-E)$^2$</th>
<th>(O-E)$^2$/E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1225</td>
<td>20.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>400</td>
<td>6.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-43</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>30.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2$ (cal.) = 57.91, df = 2. $X^2$ tab at 0.05 level of significance = 5.99. Since the calculated $X^2$ of 57.91 is greater than $X^2$ table value, we reject the null hypothesis (Ho) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H$_1$). This implies that that there is a significant relationship between the financial empowerment of women and poverty alleviation. When women are financially empowered they are able to rise above poverty and take care of both themselves and their children.

**6.6 Constraints of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation Programme.**

The study found among others that the women poverty alleviation programme is working towards the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Lagos. The programme has contributed immensely towards alleviating poverty by financially empowering the women. However, despite its clear goals and strategies, some of its contributions seem not to have the kind of impact desired due to certain internal and external constraints including: inadequate and untimely release of funds by the government; inadequate/inappropriate staffing; inability to monitor the impact cum performance of beneficiaries due to logistics problems; massive unemployment among women.

**7. Recommendations**

The study was directed at assessing poverty alleviation among women in Lagos. Arising from the findings, the study recommends that institutional arrangements to enhance the status of women and increase their access to education should be strengthened. Steps should be taken to formulate policies aimed at practicalizing the United Nations Resolutions as regards the elimination of discrimination against women and the enhancement of their participation in nation building. Government should work towards total elimination of all social and cultural practices tending to discriminate against and dehumanize womanhood. Equal importance should be given to male and female education as well as counseling girls in other to reduce high rate of dropout among females. Government should encourage employers, NGOs and individuals to meet the rapidly increasing demand for nurseries and day care centres for the children of working mothers. Women should have greater access to political opportunities as well as taking part in the political decision making process. There should be bright prospects of job opportunities for girls to reduce dropout rates among girls. Lastly, data-gathering institutions should emphasize gender disaggregated data. This would ensure a better appreciation of the characteristics of women at school, at work, etc. and thereby enhance the formulation of more relevant policies to promote the status of women.
8. Conclusion
The study concludes that the fight against poverty and the empowerment of women in Lagos is one that has multiple facets. The Women and Poverty Alleviation Programme has succeeded thus far because it has had the support of relevant government machinery and agencies as well as NGOs. Yet the fight has not been won. It is evident that the programme can only do so much but without a national concern about eradicating poverty and empowering women, the challenges faced by the programme will continue to rise taking into consideration the cosmopolitan nature of Lagos. Nevertheless, a lot of efforts and resources have gone into achieving the goals of the programme especially with regards to poverty reduction, women empowerment, and gender equality. The programme has set out projects for the years to come. Some of them include the establishment of more skills acquisition centres particularly in the rural areas and the extreme reduction of poverty and hunger by 2014. To achieve these would not only require the support of all agencies that have been supportive over the years but would also need adequate/appropriate staff and the timely release of funds. Hopefully, in years to come and with more achievements to celebrate, poverty alleviation would have succeeded to a large extent in Lagos and this would contribute positively to changing the lives of women. The way forward to reduced poverty among females involves a combination of the efforts of different stake holders including the government, NGOs, women activists, all members of the population and women themselves.

References
Ojo, F. (1996), A new approach to solving the problem of unemployment, Lagos, UNILAG.

Bio Profile

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