

# PROMOTING WOMEN EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND RELIANCE

*Mrs C. O. Ololobou*

## **Abstract**

Education performs the economic function of manpower development and selecting and allocating persons into areas they are capable of performing. The current way women education is pursued it is believed need to be reorganised to enable women participate effectively in all spheres of national life. This paper addresses the role of women education in promoting economic rehabilitation and reliance. It reviewed facts about women generally, constraints placed on the education of women and their economic contributions and the role which women education can play in economic rehabilitation and reliance. Recommendations are made for improved organisation of women education for higher economic productivity.

## **Introduction**

The woman is the female specie of human beings possessing biological abilities of giving birth and raising young ones. In times past, her role in society was basically domestic. She was expected to be a good wife and mother; a passive sexual object to be seen and not heard. In fact, in some circles she was considered of low intelligence incapable of making sound and rational decisions. This traditional view of the woman affected her self-concept and esteem. The introduction of western type of education has not erased this traditional perception of the women. In fact, societal beliefs and practices have prevented a whole lot of women access to education and from reaping the benefits there in. Most times the female child sacrifices her chance to education to her male siblings. Even where attempts are made to send her to school, her education is prematurely terminated and she is forced into marriage. The resultant effect, is the creation of untrained women with no vital skills to put into productive use. This is in spite of the fact that the woman is endowed with innate abilities and potentialities. Thus, most live in abject poverty, ignorance and disease. But, the woman as a full-fledged human being can be adequately prepared through training and education to make immense contributions towards societal development.

This paper discusses the need to promote women education for economic rehabilitation and reliance.

## **Some Realities About Women**

Morgan (1996) opined that although there had been dramatic changes geo-politically, scientifically and technologically since the 1980s, the conditions of women remain virtually the same and in some regions of the world has worsened. Morgan (1996), Suara (1998), Osuman (1997) Enemuo (1999) presented the following facts about women especially in developing countries.

- Female human beings comprise over 2/3rds of the world's illiterates. In sub-Saharan Africa 64% of women are illiterates.
- 90% of African countries have low female enrolment figures at all level of education.
- About 18% of the female population aged 15-19 years give birth in Africa as against 8% in Latin American, 5% in North America and 3% in Asia and Europe.
- Women receive only one-tenth of the world's income and own less than 1% of all property. 80%-90% of the world poor are women.
- Women form the majority of the world's labour force unemployed and underemployed. Most of their work is either not paid for or less paid.
- Women and their children constitute 90% of all refugees in the world.
- Only 10% of people who hold top positions of power in all private and public institutions are women,
- Women have little access to credit and funding and suffer disproportionately from state and domestic violence.
- Women lack basic human rights of full reproductive freedom and sexual choice resulting in disabling diseases and injuries.

These facts are pathetic especially when one considers the fact that women constitute half of the world's population and contribute significantly to the economic well-being of the human race. The World Bank Report (1996) noted that women produce about 70-80% of food grown and eaten in virtually all developing countries.

### **The Concept 'Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance'**

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1978) considers the economy as connected with trade, industry and wealth. Rehabilitation entails to put back into good condition. In other words to make to live life again, back into a better former position.

Putting both ideas together, economic rehabilitation connotes restoring and reinstating the economy into good working condition for enhanced national prosperity. When a nation is economically prosperous it illogically follows that its citizens have unproved standard of living and level of survival.

Reliance is the use of one's own powers of action and judgement without depending on others. Tarnuno (1982) opined that it involves a sustainable utilization of a nation's human and natural resources to provide an enviable national sovereignty in all its facets or ramifications.

Lavyal (1975) noted that every nation's economy has basic problems to address. For instance:

- (i) How fully to utilize its natural resources.
- (ii) How to adequately allocate resources.
- (iii) Technical methods of production.
- (iv) Distribution of national products and income among various individuals and groups,
- (v) Capacity to continually produce goods and services yearly.

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Similarly, the World Book Encyclopedia (1975) outlined natural resources, capital, labour force and technology as the four basic productive resources of every national economy. Lawal (1976) noted that most West African nations have low income per head, low growth rate and hence low standard of living. He argued that the poor state of the economy of these nations is attributable to inadequate human resources to exploit the abundant natural resources. The mere possession of natural resources and a high population does not guarantee a high standard of living unless there exist the will and ability to exploit the resources by an intelligent, trained and educated labour force. Since the labour force means men and women who work or are seeking work, their education and skill are of crucial importance for genuine economic growth and development.

#### **- Constraints on Women Education**

- The philosophy of education in Nigeria is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal opportunity for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both within and outside the school system. Specifically, the goals of women education include:

- (i) Creating awareness of all citizens to the fact that equal opportunities exist irrespective of

- age, gender, locality, creed or special states;

- (ii) Provision of more educational opportunities for girls from primary to tertiary level;

(iii) Provision of functional education for girls and women through skills such as sewing,

- cooking, typing, knitting, tie and dye.

- (iv) Provision of functional education for girls and women in the field of science and technology (Dare, 2003:49).

- A close examination of these goals portray the need for special attention to the education of women. According to Enemuo (1999) gender bias against women socio-culturally economically and politically have prevented the empowerment of women to enable them contribute effectively towards national development. He identified some of these factors as: (i) Economic exploitation and impoverishment. (ii) Discriminatory laws and customs, (iii) Exclusion from public life. (iv) Violence against women.

- In terms of economic exploitation and impoverishment, Enemuo (1999) explained that generally the contributions of women to the economy are unrecognised and unrewarded. They are

not paid for house-work, family labour and their role in the informal economic sector. In addition, women undertake about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all agricultural work and traditionally required to produce food crops as against economic cash crops which will ensure their empowerment. Also, there is a concentration of women in low-paying jobs and stereo-typing of certain jobs as suitable for women. The result is low enrolment in science related courses (Okafor, 1999).

- As regards discriminatory laws and customs, most African societies accord women low esteem and consider them inferior to men. There exists a wide preference for male children with the attendant consequence of preferring to send him to school because they are seen as future breadwinners and promoters of the family name. Thus, the girl is given out early in marriage thereby aborting her access to education (Enemuo, 1999; and Aderemi, 1999).

- Explaining further, Enemuo (1999) opined that given that most women have been denied good education that they command very limited economic resources and prevailing cultural norms, it is not surprising that they are grossly under-represented in public life and decision making positions in most modern states. Udegbe (1998) in Enemuo (1999) explained that the representation of women in positions of leadership in the three tiers of government in Nigeria in the last three decades have been low and even the few in position of authority find themselves working in a group that is male dominated. The effect of this of course is marginalization, violence against women is prevalent in most societies. The United Nations development fund for women grouped violence against women to include physical abuse, psychological abuse, restricted access to sources of power and commodification of women through trafficking, forced prostitution and commercialization of women's bodies.

- All these constraints put together affect women and their economic efforts. One is therefore tempted to ask if the general failure of economic policies and programmes by successive governments is unconnected with the widespread and persistent acts against women education.

- **The Place of Women Education in Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance**

- Education is an instrument par excellence for effecting national development.

- Access to quantitative and qualitative education empower women economically. Through education women acquire knowledge, useful and usable skills to judiciously tap available resources for productive purposes. Jaja (1998) opined that an educated woman is equipped with knowledge and skill not only to contribute but also to benefit from economic-oriented and developmental programmes.

- In addition, education empowers women to increase their income-earning capacity. This in turn affects their personal and family health and nutrition. For instance, Onyemunwa (1978) in Mohammed and Onekata (1978) opined that women education especially acquisition of higher education provides women the opportunity for higher pay on their jobs. The attainment of higher earning means steady growth economically through their working life and even at the point of retirement

- The education of the women provides access to credit facilities which can be invested into trade and business to promote economic growth. With education women are better informed of viable economic activities and are opportuned to own landed properties that can serve as collateral for loans and credits: for the creation of further wealth.

- Women education provides women the opportunity to hold top political positions which can lead them to participate in the decision making process. As informed persons they would be able to articulate policies and mobilize resources both natural and human for economic development purposes. ••

- The education of women has a spill-over effect on their families. As trained individuals they will motivate their children who are the future leaders of tomorrow to acquire needed training and education for developmental purpose.

- Osuman (1999) opined that education helps an individual develop positive self concept and self esteem. Access to education can be used to re-order women's perception of themselves through the process of de-socialization and re-socialization (Enemuo, 1999). With a positive self image, women can work towards being self-reliant. Society would ultimately benefit from this as no woman would feel so inferior to participate in economically viable productive activities.

- Education is an instrument for social change. The education of women would make them receptive to innovations. Since women are active in rural system in the area of food production to

feed the teeming population, education would enable them adopt improved and technical means of production which will not only lead to increased economic productivity but well-fed and healthy citizens that can participate in other spheres of economic life. (Osuman 1997)

- On the whole the education of women provides women a better chance of controlling their lives, those of their families and communities for enhanced economic survival. However these positive benefits can only be attained through the concerted co-operative efforts of all towards women education.

### **Recommendations**

- There should be a re-launch of the national awareness campaign to fully mobilize the people of the nation to support women education.
- There is a need to enact stringent laws against early marriage and withdrawal of girls from schools.
- Women societies need to pool their resources together to establish model female schools, trade and craft centres specifically to educate the girl-child and adult women. Where possible girls from poor homes should be sponsored. This should take place in all states of the federation.
- There should be well established guidance and counseling services in schools to help career choices.
- Community based women co-operative societies should be established in local government areas to help women towards productive economic ventures. All mass media presentation that portray women in unserious circumstances or as objects of entertainment or simply for admiration should cease.
- Women must work hard to emancipate themselves by developing positive attitudes towards work, themselves and society. This means not being involved in crimes, body exposing competitions or unnecessary advertisement that damage the general female image and personality.

### **Conclusion**

The type of education needed for women is a functional one that will equip them to be productive members of society. The situation where women represent only a third of the official labour force, work 2/3 of all working hours and yet paid a tenth of world's income and own less than 1% of the world's property does not augur well for any nation's economy. The economy of Nigeria has drifted and been epileptic for too long. The general state of poverty, ignorance and disease can be drastically addressed if women education is given the needed attention it deserves. No nation can rise above the quality of its human resources. Women education is a potent tool for re-directing and re-focusing the national economy for sustainability. Now is the time to match policy statements and programmes concerning women education with action with the necessary political will and determination this can be accomplished.

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