



Influence of Community Development Programmes on Poverty Alleviation Among Women in Rivers State.

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of community development programmes on poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design with a population of 7402 respondents who are members of Community Based Organizations in the three Senatorial districts of Rivers State. A sample of 598 respondents was drawn from the population with the use of the multi stage sampling technique. A self structured questionnaire titled 'Influence of Community Development Programmes among Women Questionnaire' was used in collecting data from the respondents. The questionnaire was face and content validated by the researchers' supervisor and two other experts in Measurement and Evaluation. Mean and Standard Deviation was used in answering the research questions, while the ANOVA statistics was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. An average reliability index of 0.84 was achieved with the use of Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The result of the findings revealed that to a high extent skill acquisition programmes carried out for women has helped in poverty alleviation in Rivers state. This is because the acquired skills has made women self-employed, women now contribute to their family upkeep, women now depend on their earning and has encouraged women to start up their own businesses. The study also revealed that to a high extent health education programmes has helped towards poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. This is for the reason that women engage in family planning, proper hygiene, improved sanitation for healthy living among community members, proper nutrition etc. Based on the findings, it was recommended that centres for skills acquisition should be established in every Local Government Areas to ensure easy access to acquiring beneficial skills for capacity building. It was also recommended that young girls should also be a target of development programmes, because they grow up to become the driving force of the economy. Hence inculcating in them the necessary skills and empowerment is sustainable way of tackling future problem.

Keywords: Influence, Community Development Programmes, Poverty, Alleviation, women

INTRODUCTION

Various studies have shown that 70 percent of the Nigerian population living in the rural areas is poor. That is to say that 7 out of every 10 Nigerian living in the rural areas live below the poverty line of 2.5 US dollars per day. This situation in Nigeria and in other countries no doubt led the United Nations Assembly to come up with an eight point development agenda, tagged Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals are a set of measurable goals with associated targets that were adopted at the United Nations summit in 2000. Part of the fundamental reason for setting up this goal, is poverty alleviation/reduction by the year 2015, which assumed the foremost position in the global development agenda (Barnes, 2010). According to the World Bank (2012), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) states the paramount tasks of development as improving the welfare of all people on earth, help them realize their potentials, enable them reduce insecurity and ensure that benefits secured in the current generation are sustainable and augmented in the next generation.

Among the Sustainable Development Goals, the first goal is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. Poverty can physically and psychologically affect the well-being of an individual and as a condition, it has no barrier. Dike (2006) opined that poverty is a situation that can limit an individual's physical and mental potential, thereby affecting his functionality in the community. According to Punch Newspaper (2020), the rate of poverty in Nigeria increased from 35.0 to 38.8 per cent of the total population from 2011 to 2016. In the same vein, the report pointed out that, despite Nigeria's middle-income status, almost four out of 10 citizens lived below the national poverty line in 2016. Between 2011 and 2016, the total number of people living in poverty increased from 57 million to 74 million World Bank added. It was also noted that poverty was significantly higher in rural areas of the country in 2016. An estimated 64 percent of all poor lived in rural areas and 52 percent of the rural population lived below the poverty line in 2016 (Punch Newspaper, 2020). This is indeed a saddening reality, in that, a country that is so blessed with both natural and human resources cannot boast of the basic needs for majority of its citizens.

Poverty can limit an individual's mental and physical potential, hence affecting his functionality in the community (Dike, 2002). Implying that poverty as a condition can deprive humans of their basic needs. There are three levels of poverty according to **Sach (2005)**, which are relative, moderate and absolute or extreme. He asserts that those in extreme poverty are constantly

hungry, lack the amenities of safe drinking water and sanitation, unable to access health care, cannot afford education for some or all their children as the case may be; and perhaps lack rudimentary shelter. The moderately poor may be deficient in basic amenities such as safe drinking water and ventilated latrines or clothing, while those in relative poverty have limited access to cultural activities, quality health care, recreation and education; and whose income level is below a proportion of the average national income.

Development experts have the notion that community development as a foremost tool for tackling poverty. Community development and its contributions to solving the problems of poverty as a major strategy in solving the problem of poverty cannot be overemphasized. Community Development Programmes (CDPs) are organized activities put in place by community members to enhance their living conditions in their various communities in the society. Adekola and Oyebamiji (2008) asserted that through community development, necessary skills acquired by citizens empower them to participate productively in the national economy thereby helping to reduce the poverty levels. Carl (2016) conceptualizes community development to be a process, via which community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to their common problems. To Taylor (2013), community development is a method by which people in villages are involved in helping to improve their own economic and social conditions and thereby became effective working groups in the programme of their national development. In line with this view, major stakeholders have often come up with development programmes geared toward reducing poverty in Nigeria.

Community health care, rural electrification programme, micro-credit schemes, vocational training programmes, agricultural development programme, European Union's Micro Project Programmes (MPP9), Empowerment Support Initiative (ESI) etc. all of these efforts suggest that the contributions of community development as a major strategy in poverty alleviation cannot be over emphasized. Community development programmes are basically aimed at transforming and modernizing the living conditions of people in any given community.

Statement of the problem

Poverty and its related issues have been at the centre of national and international discourse and this is because poverty is a global scourge, a threat to humanity and community capacity for sustained development. According to Gaolathe (2004), one in five person of the world's population which is two third are women and these women live in abject poverty and more than 24 percent of the population of the developing and emerging industrialized nations live in less

than US \$1 a day. In corroboration, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2001) reportedly stated that Nigeria's poverty rate has increased over the years from 15% in 1960 to about 66% in 1996 and about 70% in 2000.

The rate of poverty in Nigeria has tremendously increased since the attainment of independence in 1960, and at that period, only 15% of the populace was living in poverty in the country but by 1980, it grew to 28.1% as well as 66% in 1996 and about 70% in 2000 (NAPEP 2001). The incidence of poverty is predominant, profound and severe in the rural areas than the urban sector. In 1980, the incidence in the rural area was put at about 28.3% of the rural populace while at the same time was put at 17.2% of the urban households. In 2004, the figures revealed a 20 percentage point gap between the poverty incidence of the urban and rural households, while 43% of urban households are poor, 63.8 of the rural households are poor; which is a reflection of the disparities in the access to opportunities and infrastructure among the different households (NBS, 2009, NBS, 2012). It is the disturbing statistics that prompted government at all levels to initiate one programme or the other as efforts towards alleviating poverty in the society especially among women.

In Rivers state, community development programmes initiated by government and development agencies such as the Rivers State Sustainable Development (RSSDA), Empowerment Support Initiative (ESI), micro-credit, agricultural development programmes, vocational training programmes, Skills Acquisition Programmes by NGOs etc. are all geared towards poverty alleviation, but with these programmes, the menace of poverty among women is still on the high side, giving room for probing whether or not community development programmes influence poverty alleviation among women in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the influence of community development programmes on poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. Specifically the study intends to:

1. Find out the extent Skills Acquisition programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among the women in Rivers state.
2. Find out the extent community health programmes has helped towards poverty alleviation among the women in Rivers state.
3. Find out the extent financial empowerment programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among the women in Rivers state.

Research Questions

The following research questions are posed to guide the study;

1. To what extent has Skills Acquisition programmes helped in poverty alleviation among the women in Rivers state?
2. To what extent has community health programmes helped towards poverty alleviation among the women in Rivers state?
3. To what extent has financial empowerment programmes helped in poverty alleviation among the women in Rivers state?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondent from Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial districts on the extent to which Skills Acquisition programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among the women in of Rivers state.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondent from Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial districts on the extent community health programmes helped towards poverty alleviation among the women in Rivers state.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondent from Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial districts on the extent financial empowerment programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among the women in Rivers state.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The variables of interest in this type of research design are usually not controlled and cannot be manipulated by the researcher. Data are usually collected after the event or incident under examination has taken place. The area of study is Rivers State. The target population comprised of 7,402 adults (females) (Ministry of Local Government Affairs, 2020) who are members of various community based organizations resident in Rivers state, spread over the three senatorial districts in Rivers state. The sample for the study

was 598 women respondents gotten with the use of the multi-stage sampling technique due to the local government areas already clustered into Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial Districts. A structured questionnaire was used for gathering data, designed specifically for the study. The questionnaire was tagged “Influence of Community Development Programmes among Women Questionnaire (ICDPWQ)”. The responses were weighted on a four (4) point rating scale of: Very Low Extent-1, Low Extent-2, High Extent-3, and Very High Extent-4 Points.

The instrument was subjected to content and face validation by the researchers’ supervisor and two other experts in Measurement and Evaluation in Rivers State University. The Cronbach Alpha was used in establishing the instrument’s reliability. Twenty copies of the Questionnaire were administered to a group of 20 respondents outside the study population and their responses were computed and a reliability index of 0.84, 0.93, 0.96, 0.81 and 0.92 was obtained, indicating that the instrument is reliable. A total of 598 copies of the questionnaire distributed out of which 586 were used for the analysis which was 98% return rate, which is adequate. Mean and ANOVA statistics were used in analyzing the data. The research questions were answered with the mean statistics, while the ANOVA statistic was used in testing the research Hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05.

RESULTS

Research Question One: To what extent have skills acquisition programmes helped in poverty the alleviation among women in Rivers state?

Table 4.2: Mean responses on the extent skills acquisition programmes have helped towards poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state.

S/N	Statement	Rivers East N=261			Rivers West N=170			Rivers South West N=155		
		\bar{X}	SD	Decision	\bar{X}	SD	Decision	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
6	Acquired skills on bead making have made me self-employed.	3.06	0.46	High Extent	3.29	0.78	High Extent	3.36	0.74	High Extent

7	The acquisition of hair dressing skills has made it possible for me to contribute to the upkeep of my children.	3.20	0.47	High Extent	3.45	0.58	High Extent	3.30	0.56	High Extent
8	With the acquired skills on tie and dye, am able to foot my personal bills.	3.34	0.69	High Extent	3.22	0.80	High Extent	3.17	0.76	High Extent
9	With Acquiring of skills on tailoring, women now earn money for personal upkeep.	2.53	0.95	High Extent	2.88	0.94	High Extent	2.94	0.87	High Extent
10	Acquisition of cake making skill rewards women with the finance to cater for their upkeep.	2.55	0.82	High Extent	2.68	1.01	High Extent	2.72	0.96	High Extent
11	Acquired skills soap making have instilled leadership qualities in me.	2.54	1.00	High Extent	2.72	0.92	High Extent	2.60	0.97	High Extent
12	Acquiring driving skill discouraged idleness among women and encouraged them to start their own transport businesses.	3.13	0.68	High Extent	3.10	0.89	High Extent	3.06	0.93	High Extent
13	Computer training programme has increased productivity and income level.	3.12	0.79	High Extent	3.04	0.95	High Extent	3.03	0.92	High Extent
Grand Mean		2.61	0.73	High Extent	3.04	0.85	High Extent	3.02	0.83	

Table 4.2 above shows the mean responses and standard deviation of respondents on the extent skills acquisition programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. All items on the table had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. Items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 has mean scores of 3.06, 3.20, 3.34, 2.53, 2.55, 3.13 and 3.12; standard deviations of 0.46, 0.47, 0.69, 0.95, 0.82, 1.00, 0.68 and 0.79 for Rivers East. Mean scores of 3.29, 3.45, 3.22, 2.88, 2.68, 3.72, 3.10 and 3.04; standard deviation of 0.78, 0.58, 0.80, 0.94, 1.01, 0.92, 0.89 and 0.95 for Rivers West and mean scores of 3.36, 3.30, 3.17, 2.94, 2.72, 2.60, 3.09 and 3.03; standard deviation of 0.74, 0.56, 0.76, 0.96, 0.97, 0.93 and 0.92 Rivers South West. Indicating that acquired skills on bead making have made women self-employed, acquisition of hair dressing skills has made it possible for women to contribute to the upkeep of their children, with the acquired skills on tie and dye, women are able to foot their personal bills, acquiring of skills on tailoring, women now earn money for personal upkeep, acquisition of cake making skill rewards women with the finance to cater for their upkeep, acquired skill of soap making have instilled leadership qualities in women, acquiring driving skill discouraged idleness among

women and encouraged them to start their own transport businesses and also computer training programme has increased productivity and income level among women.

With grand mean scores of 2.61, 3.04 and 3.02 which are greater than the criterion mean for Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West, the answer to research question two is that to a high extent skill acquisition programmes carried out for women has helped in poverty alleviation in Rivers state.

Research Question Two: To what extent has health education programmes helped towards poverty alleviation among the women in Rivers state?

Table 4.3: Mean responses on the extent health education programmes have helped towards poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state.

S/N	Statement	Rivers East N=261			Rivers West N=170			Rivers South West N=155		
		\bar{X}	SD	Decision	\bar{X}	SD	Decision	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
14	Environmental sanitation campaign on keeping a clean environment is beneficial in that it made me realize that a dirty environment breeds sickness which makes one spend money.	3.35	0.62	High Extent	3.26	0.60	High Extent	3.28	0.62	High Extent
15	Campaign on self medication is aimed at discouraging wasting limited finance on drugs.	3.27	0.58	High Extent	3.37	0.69	High Extent	3.01	0.82	High Extent
16	Family planning/Contraceptive campaigns have helped with child spacing hence proper use of limited funds.	3.11	0.84	High Extent	3.07	0.82	High Extent	3.09	0.81	High Extent
17	Maternal mortality campaign has equipped women with knowledge that funds spent on regular check-up with doctors are beneficial for healthy living.	3.23	0.59	High Extent	3.21	0.62	High Extent	3.23	0.69	High Extent
18	Proper hygiene campaign has helped in the reduction of expenses for treatment of sicknesses thereby making funds available to meet other needs.	3.20	0.69	High Extent	3.13	0.72	High Extent	3.06	0.77	High Extent
19	Campaigns on managing diabetes has equipped women with knowledge to prioritize spending.	3.29	0.51	High Extent	3.48	0.58	High Extent	3.42	0.60	High Extent
20	Health awareness campaigns have helped women with appropriate use of funds for proper nutrition.	3.04	0.46	High Extent	3.18	0.57	High Extent	3.20	0.58	High Extent
21	Women who partake in STDs/STIs campaigns are given stipends as facilitators.	3.33	0.75	High Extent	3.21	0.82	High Extent	3.21	0.82	High Extent
22	Women facilitators of Kick-out malaria campaigns are paid for their services.	3.01	0.80	High Extent	2.97	0.81	High Extent	2.87	0.90	High Extent

23	Women participants of workshops on oral hygiene are equipped with the knowledge on proper oral care hence reducing waste of scarce funds.	2.92	0.86	High Extent	2.96	0.91	High Extent	2.96	0.94	High Extent
24	Women who took part in breast cancer seminars acquired knowledge on breast health which has helped them save funds for other use.	2.77	0.70	High Extent	3.04	0.84	High Extent	3.00	0.80	High Extent
25	Women who were part of the team for Polio vaccination made income which they used to meet other needs.	2.55	0.91	High Extent	2.65	0.98	High Extent	2.61	1.03	High Extent
Grand Mean		3.08	0.69	High Extent	3.12	0.74	High Extent	3.07	0.78	High Extent

Table 4.3 above shows the mean responses and standard deviation of respondents on the extent health education programmes helped towards poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state.

All items on the table had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. Items 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 has mean scores of 3.35, 3.27, 3.11, 3.23, 3.20, 3.29, 3.04, 3.33, 3.01, 2.92, 2.77 and 2.55; standard deviations of 0.62, 0.58, 0.84, 0.59, 0.69, 0.51, 0.46, 0.75, 0.80, 0.86, 0.70 and 0.91 for Rivers East. Mean scores of 3.26, 3.37, 3.07, 3.21, 3.13, 3.48, 3.18, 3.21, 2.97, 2.96, 3.04 and 2.65; standard deviation of 0.60, 0.69, 0.82, 0.62, 0.72, 0.58, 0.57, 0.82, 0.81, 0.91, 0.84 and 0.98 for Rivers West and mean scores of 3.28, 3.01, 3.09, 3.23, 3.06, 3.42, 3.20, 3.21, 2.87, 2.96, 3.00 and 2.61; standard deviation of 0.62, 0.82, 0.81, 0.69, 0.77, 0.60, 0.58, 0.82, 0.90, 0.94, 0.80 and 1.03 Rivers South West

With grand mean scores of 3.08, 3.12 and 3.07 for Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West, which are greater than the criterion mean, the answer to research question three is that to a high extent health education programmes helped towards poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state.

Research Question three: To what extent has financial empowerment programmes helped in poverty alleviation among the women in Rivers State?

Table 4.4: Mean responses on the extent financial empowerment programmes have helped in poverty alleviation among the women in Rivers state.

S/N	Statement	Rivers East N=261			Rivers West N=170			Rivers South West N=155		
		\bar{X}	SD	Decision	\bar{X}	SD	Decision	\bar{X}	SD	Decision

26	Financial assistance made available to women by micro-credit schemes has helped to boost their income generation and thereby reduce poverty.	3.03	0.88	High Extent	2.91	1.09	High Extent	2.55	0.96	High Extent
27	ICME Loans given to women have helped them start up their own businesses hence making them self-reliant.	2.64	0.98	High Extent	2.62	0.94	High Extent	2.56	1.09	High Extent
28	Micro credit loans given to women groups by Family Economic Advancement Program have increased their daily income making it possible for them to meet their need.	2.56	0.87	High Extent	2.65	1.05	High Extent	2.55	1.05	High Extent
29	Financial assistance given by the Nigerian Agriculture Cooperative and Rural Development Bank has helped women venture into businesses which has reduced poverty among them.	2.56	1.00	High Extent	2.55	1.05	High Extent	2.55	0.97	High Extent
30	LAPO provides micro-credit loans to women to aid income generation aimed at reducing poverty.	2.77	0.93	High Extent	2.55	1.13	High Extent	2.67	1.11	High Extent
31	Co-operative thrift and Loan Society gives women interest free loans to support their businesses, hence making them self-sufficient.	2.93	1.00	High Extent	2.57	1.04	High Extent	2.52	0.96	High Extent
Grand Mean		2.74	0.94	High Extent	2.64	1.04	High Extent	2.56	1.02	High Extent

Table 4.4 above shows the mean responses and standard deviation of respondents on the extent financial empowerment programmes helped in poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. All items on the table had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. Items 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31 has mean scores of 3.03, 2.64, 2.56, 2.56, 2.77 and 2.93; standard deviations of 0.88, 0.98, 0.87, 1.00, 0.93 and 1.00 for Rivers East. Mean scores of 2.91, 2.62, 2.65, 2.55, 2.55 and 2.57; standard deviation of 1.09, 0.94, 1.05, 1.05, 1.13 and 1.04 for Rivers West and mean scores of 2.55, 2.56, 2.55, 2.55, 2.67 and 2.52; standard deviation of 0.96, 1.09, 1.05, 0.97, 1.11 and 0.96 Rivers South West

With grand mean scores of 2.74, 2.64 and 2.56 for Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West, which are greater than the criterion mean, the answer to research question four is that to a high extent financial empowerment programmes helped towards poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents from Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial districts on the community development programmes that have been carried out for women in Rivers state.

Table 4.6: Analysis of Hypothesis 1 using one way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F. cal	P-value	F crit	Decision
Between Groups	2.51	2	1.25	34.30	0.05	3.01	Reject
Within Groups	21.35	583	0.036				
Total	23.86	585					

Table 4.6 above shows that the F. calculated value of 34.30 is greater than the F. critical value of 3.01 at 0.05 significant level for 585 degree of freedom indicating that, there is significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents from Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial districts on the community development programmes that have been carried out for women in Rivers state. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondent from Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial districts on the extent to which Skills Acquisition programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among the women in of Rivers state.

Table 4.7: Analysis of Hypothesis 2 using one way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F. cal.	P-value	F. crit.	Decision
Between Groups	1.62	2	0.813	8.94	0.05	3.01	Reject
Within Groups	53.03	583	0.09				
Total	54.66	585					

Table 4.7 above shows that the F. calculated value of 8.94 is greater than the F. critical value of 3.01 at 0.05 significant level for 585 degree of freedom indicating that, there is significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents from Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial districts on the extent to which Skills Acquisition programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondent from Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial districts on the extent community health programmes has helped towards poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state.

Table 4.8: Analysis of Hypothesis 3 using one way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit	Decision
Between Groups	0.24	2	0.12	2.79	0.05	3.01	Accept
Within Groups	25.34	583	0.04				
Total	25.58	585					

Table 4.8 above shows that the F. calculated value of 2.79 is less than the F. critical value of 3.01 at 0.05 significant level for 585 degree of freedom indicating that, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents from Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial districts on the extent to which community health programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. This means that the null hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the findings revealed that to a high extent skill acquisition programmes carried out for women has helped in poverty alleviation in Rivers state. This is because the acquired skills have made women self-employed, women contribute to their family upkeep, depend on their earning and also encouraged women to start up their own businesses. The corresponding hypothesis two revealed that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents from Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial districts on the extent to which Skills Acquisition programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. The finding is in line with Aruma and Jackreece (2016) who opined that adult education programmes are meant to enable citizens of Nigeria to acquire skills and competencies which will enhance their living condition in the a modern society. The finding also corroborates with Dickson, Solomon and Weaver (2008) who explained that it is no doubt that skills acquisition programmes contribute immeasurably towards creating new jobs, wealth, poverty reduction and

income generation for both individual and governments. The finding also supports Akpama, Esang, Asor and Osang (2011) who revealed that the acquisition of vocational skills leads to a significant reduction in poverty among young adults in Cross Rivers State. The finding is also in agreement with Flore (2019) who stated that empowerment of women is a winning strategy for poverty reduction.

The findings from research question two showed that to a high extent health education programmes has helped towards poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. This is for the reason that women engage in campaign on family planning, proper hygiene; improved sanitation for healthy living among community members, proper nutrition etc. The corresponding hypothesis three revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents from Rivers East, Rivers West and Rivers South West Senatorial districts on the extent to which community health programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. This indicates that respondents are in agreement that community health programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among women. The finding is in line with World Health Organization (2001) who opined that health education is a means of achieving the other development goals relating to poverty reduction.

The findings from research question three revealed that to a high extent financial empowerment programmes helped towards poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. This is because loans given has helped women start up businesses, has discouraged migration to urban centres and due to the income they make, support their husbands financially. The corresponding hypothesis four revealed that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents on the extent to which financial empowerment programmes has helped in poverty alleviation among women in Rivers state. Indicating that the responses of the respondents differ. The findings is in line with Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) who opined that empowerment equips the local folks

with the needed skills, tools, legal backing and resources to perform. In other words, it's a process of liberating individuals from the state of hopelessness (poverty). Similarly, the findings is in line with World Bank (2012) who opined that empowerment enhances personal or group capacity of making choices and converting those choices towards preferred action and outcome and in this context, preferred action towards poverty alleviation. The finding supports Odioma and Iboro (2010) whose study revealed that micro-credit schemes present enormous potentials for enhancing income generation; improving household's living conditions and reducing abject poverty in rural area.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that community development programmes such as skills acquisition, community health education and financial empowerment to a high extent help in poverty alleviation in Rivers state, and this is evident in the ability of women being able to start businesses of their own; become conscious of their dietary intake, have the ability to earn and support their families, and impact on the reduction in the unemployment rate.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Government and Non-Governmental agencies should intensify their efforts towards floating more developmental programmes to embrace more people at the grassroot.
2. Centres for skills acquisition should be established in every Local Government Area to ensure easy access to acquiring beneficial skills for income generation and poverty alleviation.
3. The efforts of government at all levels should be intensified towards health programmes, to ensure its citizens are conscious of the benefits of healthful living because only healthy individuals are productive in the society (health is wealth).

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