

Women Empowerment As An Effective Strategy For Enhancing The Community Management Of Developmental Projects In Enugu State

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Abstract

The study centred on women empowerment as an effective strategy for community management of developmental projects. The study is necessary bearing in mind that community management has been proposed as one possible alternative strategy in view of the increasing evidence that systems are more sustainable when designed, established, and operated by the community. Community management is the outcome of a collaborative partnership between the community and government in which the community is dominant, but each understands and accepts its roles. This type of relationship places new demands on both parties: communities must become the focal point of decision-making, and governments must help create or support conditions in which community-based actions can occur. Much remains to be done to pave way for sound community management. That brought in the issue of empowerment on the community members especially, the womenfolk. This paper therefore, examined the need for women empowerment in community management of developmental projects. The need to empower the poor and women for active participation in, and management of developmental projects has now been recognized by development practitioners. Various measures and definitions of empowerment were examined; the factors that affect women's active roles in the management of community development projects were also discussed. Broadly speaking, empowerment means enhancing the

capabilities of people to participate in development. This involves access of the powerless to education and training to equip them with skills; access to health and improved nutrition, access to resources including land and credit. Finally, the powerless themselves, especially women, should seek to be actively involved in decision-making to ensure that issues concerning them receive adequate attention from policy-makers

Introduction

Community management is an appealing solution to the current sustainability problems rural communities are experiencing with community development projects. Mc Common, Warner and Yohalem (1990) noted that community responsibility appears to have the potentials to ensure internal support and thus reduce the high rates of nonuse, breakdown, and misuse that have plagued new systems in developing countries. With the expected higher rates of cost recovery from such a community-based approach, and the associated capital and recurrent cost savings, governments and donor could expand national coverage. However, before any move can be made towards community management of development projects, governments must be required to provide additional resources to develop local capacity for management and establish enabling support systems. Also, they must be prepared to undertake a fundamental bureaucratic re-orientation of the project development cycle so that the concept of community management can be introduced in each stage.

It therefore infers from the fore-going premises that no meaningful management of community development projects can be successfully achieved without the empowerment of the community members, especially the womenfolk. This is because empowerment leads to the development of relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes among the members of the community. According to Okpoko (2000), “empowerment implies that the person or group of persons being empowered has hitherto lacked power or authority by circumstances either by denial or fault”. Therefore, empowerment leads to the involvement of the community members in identifying issues and needs in the community, prioritizing them, generating alternative strategies to address them, tracking down the most appropriate strategy and evolving projects to implement the strategy through the ability

and competences of the community leaders or development workers (Obetta, 2004).

In the specific case of women, Enemuo (2001) stated that empowerment entails the improvement of women in their political, economic and social conditions. It therefore involves the transformation of patriarchal society through a process of enlightenment, conscientization, and collective organization and therefore necessitates collective action by women to discard patriarchal beliefs and attitudes. Also, Chukwudozie (1999) declared that the governments that participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women were convinced that women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace. This is because women's rights are human rights. There should be equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them. Mc Common, *et al* (1990) observed that in Kwale, Kenya, women participated in the design of technology, operation, maintenance, and cost recovery. The emphasis on promoting women as managers from initial phases of a project has contributed to the sustainability of systems. In the Philippines, women helped to ensure their family's support for constructing and using latrines. In some areas, women initiated campaigns to raise community funds for materials to complete toilets. Both these projects indicate that systems are functioning and being used with a high degree of success.

Given that women form over 50 per cent of the world's population, their capacity building is crucial for holistic development. Unfortunately, Ukwuaba (2008) observed that in Enugu State, many women are not involved in the fight for the abolition of female circumcision, reduction of high bride price and prevention of childhood marriage. In political sphere, they are also left out. Not many of them are involved in settling family disputes, promoting women participation both in community development and in politics as office holders. Also, very few of them set up small-scale industries, have improved income and reduced financial dependence on their husbands. All these point to lack of empowerment by the majority of women in Enugu State in the form of education, political, socio-cultural and economic empowerment. Evidence abounds in various communities in Enugu State that many developmental projects have stopped functioning due to mismanagement. A closer look at the composition of the management committee membership of those projects reveals that women are excluded. In Etteh Community of Igbo-

Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu State for example, the water bore-hole that supplies water to the greater part of the community could not function adequately until it was handed over to a women group to manage. The women group exhibited proficiency in accountability and maintenance culture. The water bore-hole projects at Uda, Enugu-Ezike, Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area and Ohom-Orba, Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State are still other cases where there is proper management of community projects because women form part of the management committees. It then shows that if the womenfolk are properly empowered, adequate management of community development projects would be ensured.

Concept of Community Management

The concept of community management will be discussed under the following sub-headings:

- The Meaning of Community Management
- The Conditions Necessary for Community Management
- The Levels of Community Management

The Meaning of Community Management: Community Management refers to the capabilities and willingness of beneficiaries to take charge and determine the nature of the development affecting them (Mc Common, *et al*, 1990). It means that the community exercises responsibility for decision-making and control over the subsequent execution of these decisions during project development. Until recently, community management of development projects has generally been concerned with questions of maintenance, the participation of women and in-kind contributions, all of which involve community participation and therefore were said to promote sustainability. Yet, Mc Common, *et al*, (1990) noted that sustainability depends on more than community participation alone, although community participation does appear to provide the environment required for successful community management, which has come to be known as the enabling environment. The distinctive feature of community management is the nature of decision-making and the locus of responsibility for executing those decisions. Therefore, community management refers to the capability of a community to control, or at least strongly influence, the development of its development projects. It is concerned with all issues pertaining to responsibility (ownership), decision-making authority, and control over project development and systems operations, whereas, community participation

stresses community involvement and contributions. Summarily, community management of development projects must be seen as the culmination of a long-term effort by the community, the government and, often, the private sector striving to help the community become self-reliant and gain control over such development (Yacoob, 1989).

The Conditions Necessary for Community Management: According to Ocholi (2005), management of community development projects has the following features, which are foundation of true community management:

- Ownership, Responsibility, Demand and Willingness to pay.
- Community empowerment.
- Gender, Equity, Resource and Facility Management.
- Focused exclusively on community.
- Private sector participation.
- Poverty and Vulnerable focused.
- Community organization, and Operation and Maintenance (p. 228 – 229).

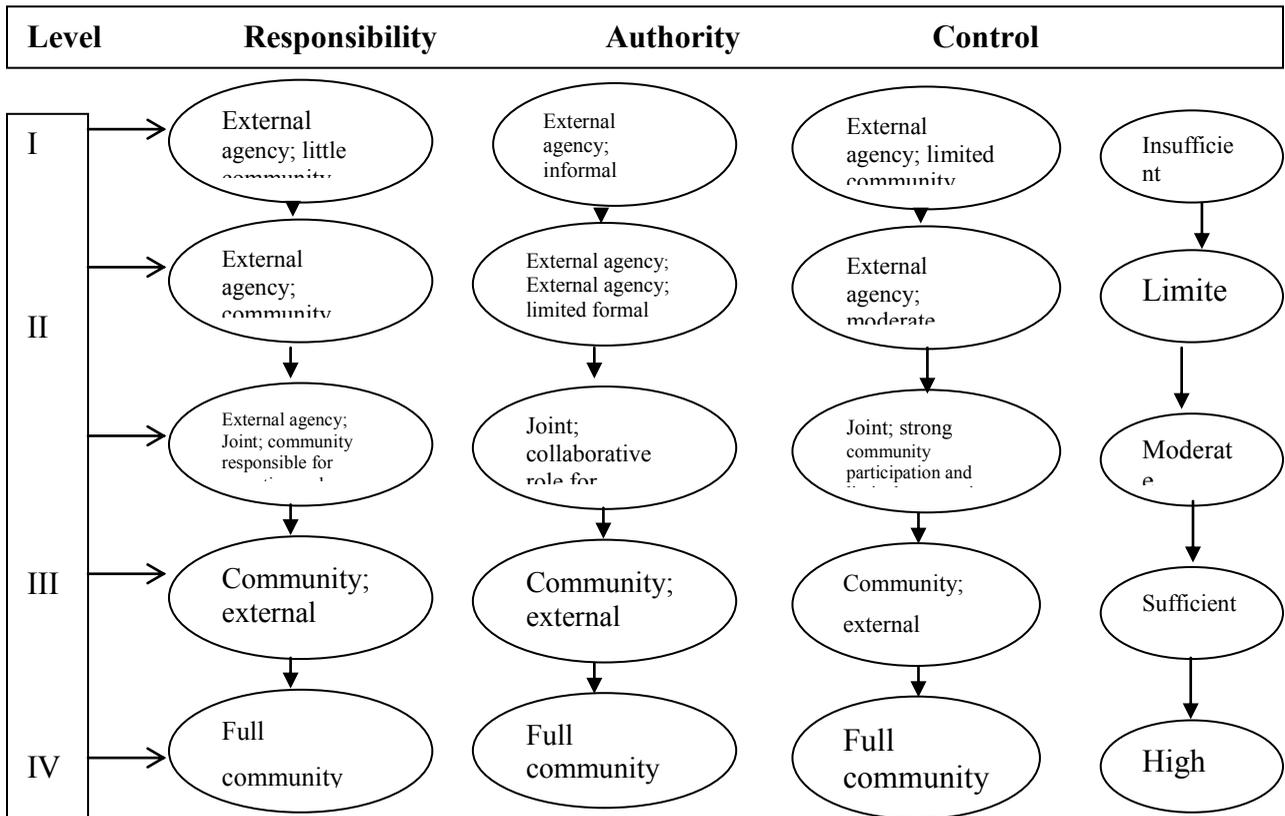
Based on the above features, it necessary to state that community management implies a variety of management systems, from extensive contributions of self-help labour at lower levels of service to specialized managers at higher levels of services. In a related development, Mc Common, *et al*, (1990) stated that the important pre-conditions for the community management of development projects include:

- i. There must be community demand for an improved system.
- ii. The information required to make informed decisions must be available to the community.
- iii. Technologies and levels of service must be commensurate with the community's needs and capacity to finance, manage, and maintain them.
- iv. The community must understand its potions and be willing to take responsibility for the system.
- v. The community must be willing to invest in capital and recurrent costs.
- vi. The community must be empowered to make decisions to control the system.
- vii. The community should have the institutional capacity to manage the development and operation of the system.
- viii. The community should have the human resources to run these institutions.

- ix. There should be a policy framework to permit and support community management.
- x. Effective external support services must be available from governments, donors and the private sector (training, technical advice, credit, construction, contractors, etc.), (p. 11 – 12).

Levels of Community Management: There is need to establish the relationship between community participation and community management. The linkage can be seen as a building process in which participation leads to management through progressive levels of local responsibility, authority, and control as management passes from external agency to the community. Mc Common, *et al* (1990) state the five (5) levels in the building process as shown on figure 1 below:

Figure1: Levels of Community Management



Source: Modified from Mc Common, Warner & Yohalem (1990)

Level I: It is the baseline for community management. At this stage, the community plays only a marginal role in system development and operation. The external agency is almost entirely in charge and is therefore responsible for the development, operation, and maintenance of the system. The community may accept responsibility for a few self-help tasks and token donations to an operation and maintenance (O & M) fund in exchange for obtaining the system. This level of participation is not sufficient for the community to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility or to develop the ability to oversee the operation of the completed system. Although the community or its leaders may be consulted before decisions are made, the only authority they have is the right to say no. This authority to say no is not always exercised, but when the system is built, the people refuse to use or maintain it.

Level II: It refers to a situation in which a community has somewhat greater, but still very limited, capacity for management. The external agency retains responsibility, authority, and control over most aspects of system development, while the community acts in a subordinate, supportive manner. The intensity of community participation is not sufficient for communities at this level are seldom prepared to take full responsibility for system maintenance.

Level III: It involves a collaborative development of relationship between the community and the agency. Most projects cited as good examples of community participation are probably at this level of management capacity. Although implementing agencies, projects, and non-governmental organizations seldom relinquish their command over project development at this level, they delegate sufficient authority and turn over enough control to enable and encourage the communities to take on joint responsibility for the development and O & M of the completed systems. Community participation is promoted intensively at this level with a view to achieving capacity-building and empowerment objectives. At this stage, community committees are organized and committee members are trained to take on management responsibilities. Authority for sharing in decisions concerning project

preparation and implementation is delegated to community organizations who share the control over project execution. Promotional activities are critical in developing these skills.

Level IV: It represents reasonably effective community control of all the main elements of the system. The community becomes in charge of its system. The agency just provides technical and financial assistance to support community management. However, the transition from Level III to Level IV cannot take place unless enough of the preconditions for community management have been met to enable the external agency to turn over management responsibility to the community. The capacity for community management develops through a dynamic process in which change and growth occur at every level as well as between levels. The external agency must still play a supporting role at Level IV to ensure that development will continue to take place.

Level V: It is where the community becomes fully responsible, has full authority, and is in full control of all system activities. The external agency now acts as an enabler to ensure that the necessary technical and financial resources needed to support community-managed systems are in place. The institutionalization of resources may include a carefully developed regulatory framework, discretionary loans or grants, or access to competently trained extension services.

Concept of Empowerment

The term ‘empowerment’, according to Obetta (2004), is derived from the word ‘power’. Thus, to empower means to give power to, to give authority to, and to enable a person or group of persons gain power. Empowerment therefore implies that the person or group of persons being empowered has hitherto lacked power or authority by circumstances, denial or default. Describing empowerment as a concept that goes beyond participation, Gajanayake and Gajanayake (1993) stated that it implies enabling people to understand the reality of their environment, reflect on the factors shaping that environment, and take steps to effect changes to improve the situation. It is therefore a process that encompasses people deciding where they are now, where they to go, and developing and implementing plans to reach their goals, based on self-reliance and sharing of power. In a related development, Oreh (1994) described empowerment simply as people taking control over their own lives, gaining the ability to do things, to set their own

agenda, and to change events in a way previously lacking. This may include affecting the way others act and consciously or unconsciously forcing changes in their behaviour. Makenzie (1993) posited that empowerment means people's efforts to form relationships between themselves and the world, so that they may be better able to change things that are causing them problems. It involves the creation of new ideas, new understanding and new knowledge. From all indications, empowerment means enabling someone to have legal power and authority. According to Okojie (1999), development-oriented empowerment involves enlarging people's capabilities in terms of skills, productivity and inventiveness. It implies an empowerment that allows the people to participate actively in their own development. It is usually concerned with economic empowerment, that is, the design and implementation of policies and programmes to increase the productivity and incomes of the poor, both men and women.

In the specific case of women, Enemuo (2001) stated that "empowerment entails improvement in the political, economic and social conditions of women". According to Griffien in Okojie (1999), women empowerment means "adding to women's power", and that meant:

- having control, or gaining further control,
- having a say and being listened to,
- being able to define and create from a women's perspective,
- being able to influence social choices and decisions effecting the whole society (not just areas of society accepted as women's place),
- being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make.

A core purpose of women's empowerment is that women should be free legally, socially and psychologically to use all of their capacities, including their reproductive capacities to satisfy their individual goals. Thus, women empowerment implies the transformation of power relations at four levels – the household/family, the community, the markets, and the state. It includes control over material resources, and a change in self-perception and self-confidence by women. The object is a transition of women from a subordinate status to one full of dignity; from being statistically invisible elements of society to being a recognized and often pivotal pillar of development. Women's empowerment is seen as a means of strengthening women's participation in all facets of economic, social and political life of a nation. In the process of empowerment, women assume their own identity, value themselves, increase their self-confidence and self-esteem, and cross

the threshold of fear of the feeling of powerlessness (Report of the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life, 1996).

The core of women's empowerment framework is the argument that women's development can be viewed in terms of five levels of equity: welfare, access, conscientization, participation and control (UNICEF, 1993). In all, control is the ultimate level of equality and empowerment as it involves equal control and management of systems in the community by women. The balance of power is equal between men and women, and neither party has dominance over the other. At this stage, women are able to make decisions concerning their lives and the lives of their children, and play an active role in the development process. It leads to full recognition rewarding of the contributions of women. Thus, Odunoye (1998) affirmed that women empowerment is the process of enhancing women's capacity, widening their choices and ensuring that they (women) utilize resources optimally without reducing or compromising opportunities available just because they are women.

Dimensions of Empowerment

Empowerment incorporates many dimensions and facets. According to Okojie (1999), they include:

- ❖ Education Empowerment
- ❖ Political Empowerment
- ❖ Socio-cultural Empowerment
- ❖ Economic Empowerment

Education Empowerment: People require literacy skills for the political, economic, social and moral development. Ahmed (1992) stressed that the world is undergoing changes in arts, science and technology, and the extent to which people perceive and actually are sensitized to those changes depends on a number of variables, but the variable with the greatest catalytic influence on our knowledge, about ourselves and our world is education. The declaration of the 4th International Conference on Adult Education at Paris in 1985 in Obetta (2004) recognizes the right to learn as a major challenge to humanity. Therefore, the right to learn is:

- The right to read and write;
- The right to question and analyze;
- The right to imagine and create;
- The right to read one's own world and to write history;

The right to have access to educational resources; and
 The right to develop individual and collective skills.

Therefore, the right to learn is an indispensable tool for the survival of humanity. Oxaal (1997) asserted that those with no education tend to have earnings profiles which remain pretty flat throughout their lives. These patterns are said to indicate not just that education makes people more productive but also that it enhances the ability to learn-by-doing, causing productivity, and thus earnings, to increase at a faster rate than those with less education. So, achieving literacy education is the first step to enabling women to take control over their own lives, to participate as equals in society and to free themselves from economic and patriarchal exploitation (Phiri, 1992). A mother's level of education has a positive effect not only on her children's development, but also on the health, education, mortality rate, pre-school cognitive ability, etc. According to Obeta (2004), the common motivations for female learners are:

- i. Desire to help children to study;
- ii. More self-reliance and control over personal life;
- iii. Liberation from isolation and absolute submission to the received authority;
- iv. Wish to participate in society in the same way as men.

Empowering women with education gives them a sense of belonging in the society. Adebukola (2001) noted that when a woman is professionally empowered, she will make use of her endowment in a positive way, and being a mistress in her profession, she will not be deprived the right to practice, so as to benefit the nation. Moda (1992) opined that problems have persisted among women for such a long time because most of them have little or no exposure to literacy and education.

Political Empowerment: Politics is the act of governance, and it is through politics and governance that policies that affect the lives of many are formulated and implemented. Argawal (1995) stressed that the worth of rights of ownership and use of resources depends on the processes of decision-making through which rights are used, contested and adjudicated. These process need to be changed in favour of disadvantaged groups. it is stressed that until women are present at the decision-making table, their concerns will remain marginalized, and the oppressive division between private and public spheres will persist (El Satta, 1995). Thus, women need to be empowered politically in order to force their issues on to discussion agenda. it therefore requires the political organization of women at the

grassroots, national and international levels. The empowerment of women as community and political leaders is an essential base to further all issues that concern women. Political empowerment is a key to women demanding a say in the world economic order. Therefore, even at the household level, women should be involved in family decision-making.

Socio-cultural Empowerment: Okeke (1995) submitted that the social and cultural empowerment of women would be in keeping with the provisions of the Nigeria constitution, which stipulates equal opportunity for all irrespective of sex, creed or religion. Social and cultural empowerment of women through the dismantling of oppressive social structures will restore the dignity of womanhood and enhance self-image. Such a situation will surely breed mutual respect and love between the sexes and results in happier families. The families where women enjoy such empowerment enjoy peace and harmony, and the same token, a nation that empowers her women socially and culturally is sure to have peace and development. Empowerment of women is fundamentally about changing social and institutional frameworks which promote gender equality. Empowerment leads to a reorganization of the productive and reproductive roles within the society. According to UN (1996), socio-cultural empowerment requires that equality be built into all forms of human resource development from birth onwards. It is a direct challenge to patriarchy which is the main basis for gender inequality in many societies.

Economic Empowerment: The economic empowerment is directed at removing identified obstacles to full participation of women in money-yielding venture. Through this, the formation of women-only cooperative societies was encouraged. It is through these cooperative societies that it has become possible for women to obtain land for agricultural and non-agricultural projects. Chenery, Ahluwalia, Bell, Duloy and Jolly in Okojie (1999) stated that the poor were prevented from sharing equitably in the benefits of growth which occurred in developing countries in the sixties and early seventies by various handicaps which can be summed up as “lack of physical and human capital and lack of access”. Also, World Bank (1990) stressed on the need to assist the poor to enhance their productivity and incomes. Okojie (1999) further noted that the most effective way to reduce poverty is to expand the opportunities by which the poor can do more for themselves – economically, politically and socially. Economically, the task is to help the poor gain their rightful access to productive resources and

appropriate knowledge for their use. It requires directly addressing inequalities in the distribution of productive assets, namely through redistributing land and consciously reallocating finance to meet the needs of poor borrowers, especially women. Economic empowerment is the key to breaking the vicious cycles of gender inequality. In empowering women economically, it is necessary to address women's weak access to economic resources and their inability to take economic decision that will enhance their well-being and that of their families. Obeta (2004) gave example of a woman group that has been empowered economically. The women group is Ezinne Women Self-Help Association of Ohom-Orba that provided portable drinking water for the entire people of Ohom Community in 1988.

Factors that Affect Women's Active Roles in Community Management

The structural basis of powerlessness for women is caused by the patriarchal structure of most societies and they are grouped into the following sub-headings:

- Political and Legal structures
- Religious Systems
- Socio-cultural Practices

a) Political and Legal Structures: Okojie (1999) states that political and legal structures help to reinforce male superiority and dominance. Men usually monopolize the political power. Traditionally, village councils are composed entirely of men. In most communities, men and women rarely sit together to deliberate on village matters. Women leaders are only invited when matters concerning women are to be discussed. This has entered the modern times where only few women hold elective or appointive positions in government in most countries. On this, Eboh (2002) affirmed that women are regarded by men as political spoilers and therefore, responsible governance is not meant for them. This purports political powerlessness and women's exclusion from top echelons of knowledge, given that knowledge is power.

b) Religious Systems: The religious practices perpetuate gender inequality. At the extreme, is the practice of purdah or female seclusion by Muslims. African Traditional Religion (ATR) and the modern religions reinforce male dominance. Supporting the pervasive roles of religion in socio-cultural lives of women in the community, AAWORD (1994) stressed that African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity preach in support of control of men over their women. They preach this as a means towards the

sustenance of family, which is the very foundation of the society. Therefore, women have very limited roles in religious activities. Taboos on women during menstruation and breastfeeding have religious foundations. Women are forbidden to see some traditional masquerades, shrines, etc. Fines are prescribed for the violation of any of these restrictions.

c) Socio-Cultural Practices: According to Okojie (1999), there are many socio-cultural practices that perpetuate the powerlessness of the womenfolk. They include:

i. Marriage practices. Several marriage practices perpetuate female inferiority. Along some ethnic groups in Nigeria, men can acquire wife by betrothal whereby a woman is given out in marriage even before birth. A woman can also be inherited as a wife on the death of her husband by a male relative of her dead husband.

ii. Widowhood practices. Several widowhood practices are very derogatory to women among several ethnic groups in Nigeria. In some places in Igbo land, there is a mandatory mourning period of seven to twenty-eight days (after interment) during which the widow is not expected to take her bath. She sleeps on the floor and wears ragged clothes. To worsen the situation, the widowhood rites are enforced by female members of her late husband's family.

iii. Widow inheritance. Among several ethnic groups in Nigeria, the widow is inherited by a male relative of her late husband after certain rites are performed to appease the spirit of her dead husband.

iv. Property inheritance. In most patrilineal societies, a deceased father's property is inherited by only the male children. Often, daughters are left out. Family elders are responsible for the judicious division of the deceased's property. The widow traditionally has no right of direct inheritance of her husband's property except through her children. It is common for the deceased's relations to drive the widow out of her late husband's house or to carry away all the physical property of the deceased. Tradition justifies such behaviour as the widow is seen as a stranger belonging to another lineage.

The Way Forward

Women form an indispensable part of human resources for development. without their contributions, the economy of Nigeria cannot be expected even to be maintained at their present low levels, much less advance to meet set targets (Onah, 1998). It therefore shows that the major obstacle to national development cannot be overcome without the full participation of women. Therefore, as a way forward, the following strategies should be adopted:

1. Empowering women for development. The reasons why women are singled out for empowerment was due mainly to the activities of women's groups which made their presence felt at various international conferences. Various national and international authorities are now ready to agree that women's empowerment should be placed at the centre of development. The main reason is the recognition that women are becoming a political force both nationally and internationally. Women's empowerment is a means to strengthen women's participation in all facets of economic, social and political life. The target is all women in the society who should be mobilized for process of women empowerment. They include women in administration, in the liberal professions, in academia and elsewhere. Report of the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life (1996) asserted that the empowerment process should be considered as "access to the collective identity and purpose of women in our time".

2. Redirecting the structure of incentives. There is need to redirect public policies and services towards the vulnerable groups in the society. The poor and powerless should have access to government incentives and services such as agricultural incentives, credit, etc. Okeke (1995) advocated for formation of women-only cooperative societies so that it will become possible for women to obtain land for agricultural and non-agricultural projects.

3. Encouraging small enterprises. Most of the poor and powerless women are employed in small enterprises. In many developing countries, the future growth of employment will be concentrated in small-scale enterprises, especially household enterprises and small privately owned firms and cooperatives in urban and rural areas. It then means that preferential credit and support services should be directed towards small enterprises to enhance productivity and incomes of participants. Biswalo and Baartjies (2001) maintained that women participate in income-generating activities because they will bring increased income, which they could use to supplement whatever is available or brought in by their breadwinners of the family.

4. Improving access to credit and financial services. According to Nweze (1995), indigenous credit associations are known to operate effectively in savings and credit activities with potentials for future enlargement. They have debunked the belief that rural households have no savings, and that largely subsistence farmers are unable to organize themselves. Women suffer most from discriminatory access to resources including land and credit. With respect to land, there is need to remove all economic, legal and social impediments on women's access to land, given that in rural areas food items are grown by women. Poor women also require enhanced access to credit in order to finance their farming, food processing and trading activities. In essence, it is essential to increase access by the poor and the powerless to credit markets. More credit should be channelled to informal credit markets. Women are especially vulnerable in regard. Special banks have been formed in Nigeria for this purpose. Such banks include Peoples' Bank, and Community Bank which later metamorphosed into Micro-Finance Bank. In general, policy reforms and actions to enable the poor gain access to assets that make them less vulnerable should be promoted. Such policies and actions include security of tenure for land and housing, and access to credit and other financial services.

5. Access to education and health services. An essential aspect of empowerment is human capital development of the poor. This includes investment in their education and health as well as improving access to other social services such as safe water and sanitation and reproductive health services for women. Ndu (2002) asserted that education is a veritable instrument in bringing about positive changes in the pattern of life of the people (including women). Investment in people's health and education not only improves their well being, it improves their human capital stock thereby enhancing individual and national productivity and incomes. It is an important element for poverty reduction. This is because improving the productive of labour through investment in education, health and improved nutrition are key components of strategies to alleviate poverty. Education equips people especially, women with literacy, and numeracy. It increases the ability to learn new skills thereby facilitating participation in modern economic activities. It also affects health and life expectancy because it equips the individual with the knowledge and means to control and detect diseases. Improved health and nutrition also contribute directly to welfare. In Nigeria, the gap between men and women in access to education is very

wide. The benefits of women's education are numerous that they should not be relegated to the background. Such benefits include: lower fertility and infant mortality levels, better education of future generations, especially, girls; lower maternal mortality, etc. Education is therefore a strong empowerment mechanism for women. Access to better health facilities will also improve their productivity directly as well as by improving their own and their children's health thereby reducing their absenteeism from work. Empowering women with education gives them a sense of belonging in the society. Adebukola (2001) noted that when a woman is professionally empowered, she will make use of her endowment in a positive way, and being a master in her profession, she will not be deprived the right to practice, so as to benefit the nation. In summary, empowering women involves building up their capabilities through investment in their education and health, enhancing their access to various economic incentives and services including land, credit, etc.

6. Political empowerment. There is need to promote grassroots participatory development in which the beneficiaries (especially, women) organize themselves for community development activities, sometimes with little or no assistance. Government should create room for these micro-enterprise initiatives in social mobilization, community and rural development, small-scale industry development and growth in human resources. Such grassroots initiatives provide an important complement to national development, and help women to empower themselves. As such, women should be empowered to achieve a certain status and influence in the making of decisions at all levels, from home to the market place to cabinet and to summit meetings. Since it has not been proved that women in decision-making positions have been a disappointment when in those positions of authority, a favourable attitude among the educated people and others should be created (Ijere, 1991). Thus, the growing ascent of women into decision-making positions should be allowed. Therefore, women should take advantage of this momentum of visibility by pushing for empowerment forcefully through political participation and pressure by women's groups.

Conclusion

The empowerment of women is a long-term process that requires changes in the behaviour and attitudes of women and men in the ideology or set of ideas that society hold about gender. For the change to take place, it requires an understanding of the social structure, cultural norms and value systems that

impinge upon and influence the role expectations and behaviour of men and women. This understanding leads to empowerment. Therefore, recognizing the women empowerment as an effective strategy for any community management requires that the women should participate and enjoy on equal basis, the benefits of development. A number of strategies employed for the purpose of enhancing the empowerment of women include education, political, socio-cultural and economic empowerment. The ultimate development and stability of Nigeria will be enhanced through the empowerment of women. This is because community management capacity can be built only through a partnership between the community and external agencies, so that agencies enable rather than provide. In this way, communities acquire the necessary skills to move to higher levels of management capabilities. Once the empowerment of the community members (especially, women) is enhanced, the government and donor agencies would stop seeing themselves as providers, and instead they will act as facilitators.

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