

# THE IMPACT OF FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMME ON RURAL WOMEN IN MARU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ZAMFARA STATE, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The main purpose of this paper is to assess the impact of Family Support Programme on Rural Women in Maru Local Government Area of Zamfara State, Nigeria and investigates the problems that affects the proper implementation of family support programme (FSP) objectives. A total sample of four wards out of 10 were selected for the study. Ninety six respondents were selected out of four wards to represents the entire Maru Local Government Area. In each ward, 24 respondents were selected, data collected from field survey was analysed using various statistical tools. The major conclusion drawn from this paper was: - The family support programme had achieved part of its goal in the study area. About 54 (56%) of the respondents reported that Family Support Programme has made people self reliant, while 32 (33%) reported that it helped in eradicating poverty. Only 10 (10%) revealed that the programme created political awareness among women in the area. Survey results have also shown that 50 (52%) of the respondents are given free education in different schools. While about 19 (20%) were provided scholarships. Similarly, 22 (23%) were helped in securing admission at various Institutions of Higher Learning. Opinion regarding health services provided by Family Support Programme have shown that most of the respondents benefited from drugs supplied by Family Support Programme (FSP) 48 (50%), while 34 (35%) benefited from health education. Only 14 (15%) of the*

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*respondents enjoyed Pre-Natal care. This paper recommended some strategies for improvement of Family Support Programme in general.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Family Support Programme (FSP) was one of the groups activities established to integrate women into socio-economic development efforts. The programme was initiated by Mrs. Maryam Abacha, wife of the former president of Nigeria in 1994.

The programme was introduced to emancipate women from all forms of exploitation and domination by their male counterparts. To attain this objective, women were encouraged to participate in politics and decision making in development activities. The family support programme encourages women to actively participate in politics and contest for elections.

Hard times dominated the long history of Zamfara people particularly before the creation of the State in 1996. On the creation of the State in 1996, the struggle for self reliance continued under the auspices of the family support programme with remarkable successes. Women multipurpose Centre was commissioned in Gusau by the wife of the First Military Governor of the State in 1996. The centre was designated to provide women of Gusau with skills and entrepreneurship for self reliance.

The Family Support Programme in Maru Local Government assists abandoned children some of who had been mentally sick. Women who lost their husbands are assisted by the programme. The Maru Local Government Council and Family Support Programme provide women with good opportunities to acquire higher education. Women are given application forms to Institutions of Higher Learning free of charge. They are given scholarship to further their education at higher level.

The Federal College of Education (Technical), Gusau an institution established specifically to train women technical teachers gives special consideration to women seeking admission into the College. The Family Support Programme also engages in encouraging parents to allow their female children to go for higher education and many parents responded positively.

Family Support Programme (FSP) has arranged many seminars and workshops in Human Resource Development, Family Planning, Immunisation, Train the Trainer for women Teachers. These training had positive impact on the lives of rural women.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

When adequate feeding, shelter, clothing, education and higher income determines good standard of living are not obtainable in a society, the people of such society are considered to be living in abject poverty (Anka, 2010). Most of the women in Maru Local Government Area of Zamfara State lack these indicators and therefore are relegated to their traditional roles of home keepers with little or no income to sustain themselves and their children. In an attempt to make ends meet, such women engaged themselves in petty trading. In spite of the deplorable conditions of these women, their sizes continue to expand as a result of constant child bearing with no corresponding growth in health care services giving rise to high rate of infant maternal mortality in the area. In an attempt to raise the status of women, the government established the family support programme (FSP) right from its inception, its contribution towards empowering the women of Maru has not been clear to most of the people in the area. It is based on these revelations that the following research questions will be answered.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research paper is interested in providing answers to the following questions: -

- i) What training programmes are provided by Family Support Programme?
- ii) What are the benefits of Family Support Programme among women of Maru Local Government Area?
- iii) What are the impacts of Family Support Programme on economic empowerment of women in Maru Local Government Area?

- iv) What are the achievements of Family support Programme in creating political awareness among the women of Maru Local Government area?

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The Aim of this study was: -

- (i) To examine the positive effect of family support programme on the life of women in Maru Local Government Area.
- (ii) To investigate the problems that affects the proper implementation of family support programme objectives in Maru Local Government.
- (iii) To suggest possible solutions to the problems that affects the programme in general.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

According To Udoh (1999), development programmes have additionally neglected the contributions of women. Since the inception of the Family Support Programme, a lot of efforts on its achievements and impact on women have been presented in both the print and electronic media.

Discrimination against women has been an issue of global concern. This affects not only countries of Africa, but countries of Europe, America, and Asia etc. Evidences however show that the rate at which in Africa are discriminated is higher compared to other parts of the world (ILO, 1996). As pointed out by Oakley and Marden (1984), women in less developed areas are facing various problems that affects their contributions in the development process.

According to ILO (1996), women constitute 70% of the rural population. They don't have access to good quality life. Majority of them are underemployed. ILO assessment further stated that despite being hardworking to support their families. Majority of these women are living under the poverty line. Lim, 1996 in his ILO report stated that lack of basic education affects women chances in getting employment. Due to discrimination on gender women don't have access to advance education such as medicine, Engineering, Computer /IT education. As a result of this biaseness many young girls go for low

class employment such as labourers, farmers, tailors and housemaid etc.

Discrimination against women move from access to education to their place of employment. Even in developed countries women are not treated equally, inspite of being qualified for the job women are not paid the same salaries as their male counterparts. Women suffer from unequal promotion and career progression (Lim, 1966).

In the past women have contributed significantly to the development of their communities but these contributions have not been recognised until recently (Udoh, 1999). Many research studies on performance and productivity have shown that women are more productive than men (UNIFEM, 1997).

Hamayun (2004) conducted research on gender issues in Chitral district of Pakistan. Findings of the study revealed that rural development strategies implemented by AKRSP have assisted in socioeconomic development of women in Chitral. Riaz Haq (2009) highlighted the important contributions made by credit institutions in alleviation of rural poverty in Pakistan this has been recognised. According to a beneficiary of KASf foundation the loans given to her together with her managerial skills led to the success of her small scale business. Furthermore, the health insurance facilities given by KASf have taken care of her husband and other family members' illness.

AKRSF (2007), since it began 15 years ago it has developed the rural areas of Chitral valley and its environs. The AKRSF rural development strategies have inspired similar projects in Pakistan and other developing countries.

### **Origin of Family Support Programme**

Prior to 1950s the status of women in Nigeria has been very difficult to describe as it is not very clear. Indeed the Nigerian women were to be seen as a mother and housewife. It is true that she went to farm to plant, weed and harvest crops, contributing to the family/society's economic wellbeing. Women at this period were only restricted to domestic role (Adeze, 1995).

The agitation of improving the status of women increase which propelled most local and international organisations to establish organisations that

will enhance the development of women. Some of the International Council of Women Society (ICWS) American Feminist Organisation (AFO), the local ones were Women in Development (WID), and the National Council of Women Societies, Nigeria (NCWS), was set up to unite the family through mobilization of economic activities in the rural areas of the country.

### **General Objectives of Family Support Programme**

The Family Support Programme was set up to sustain family cohesion through the promotion of social and economic wellbeing of Nigerian family. It was also set up to promote policies programme that strengthen the observance and protection of human right and the advancement of social justice and dignity (Udoh, 1999).

The Family Support Programme was initiated to enlighten women on small scale business activities for self reliance. The goals of the Family support programme was to eradicate poverty, among less privilege women through access to adult education and skill acquisition programmes and women empowerment to have a strong sense of belonging. The programme therefore desires to provide health and education to families. In an attempt to assist women family support programme mapped out these plans the programme will attempt to sensitise the general public to gender issues which militated against the realisation on the fundamental rights of women as enshrined in the constitution, promote practices which increase family stability and reduce conflict and divorce.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Location and Population of the Study**

The study area is located in Maru Local Government Area of Zamfara State of Nigeria. The study covers eight wards that constitute the Local Government. Maru Local Government Area shares boundaries with Bungudu Local Government Area to the East, Mafara Local Government the North, Gusau Local Government to the West.

The target population for the study are married women who are 40 years of age or younger. These categories of women were chosen because they are economically active. The study cut across people from various occupation, religion and ethnic groups in the area.

### Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A sample of four wards out of 10 wards were selected. Ninety six respondents were selected out of the selected four wards to represent the entire Local Government. Furthermore, a proportionate sampling technique was used to select number of respondents from the selected four wards. A total number of 24 respondents were selected in each wards, this leads to 96 respondents.

### Techniques of Data Analysis

The data collected from the field via questionnaires was analysed using the quantitative method, the variables in the questionnaire were coded on a code sheet and a code book respectively. Information was analysed using various statistical tools like frequencies, percentages and direct response. This was used to show variation between variable.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section describes how the data was analyse, using various statistical techniques. The results were interpreted as follows:-

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The distribution of respondents according to their age and marital status are presented below in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1a- Age and Marital Status of Respondents**

<b>Age (Years)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
20 – 25 Years	7	7.3
26 – 30 Years	26	27.0
31 – 35 Years	30	31.0
36 – 40 Years	15	16.0
40 and above	18	18.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey Results, 2011

**Table 4.1b- Marital Status**

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Single	24	25
Married	62	64.5
Divirced	10	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey Results, 2011

Data presented in Table 4.1 shows that majority of the respondents are in their middle age of 31-35years. The table also shows that most of the respondents are married. It also shows low cases of divorce (10%) among this respondents. This may be attributed to the fact that most of the marriages were conducted according to the wishes of the spouses.

**Table 4.2 – Amount of Money Received from Family Support Programme as Assistance**

<b>Amount</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
N40,000 – N45,000	36	37.5
N46,000 – N55,000	40	42.0
N56,000 – N60,000	12	12.5
N60,000 and above	8	8.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey Results, 2011

Survey results in Table 4.2 have shown that most of the beneficiaries of the programme 36 (37.5%) received amounts ranging from N40,000 to N45,000 as loans to establish their business. About 8 (8%) of the respondents received the highest amount of N60,000 and above. The respondents were mostly engaged in small and medium scale business for self reliance.



**Table 4.3 – Achievements of Family Support Programme**

<b>Description</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Self Reliant	54	56
Eradicate Poverty	32	33
Created Political Awareness	10	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey Results, 2011

Data presented in Table 4.3 have shown that Family Support Programme have achieved part of its goals partially in Maru Local Government Area. This was evident because most of the respondents 54 (56%) reported that Family support Programme in the area has made women self reliant, 32 (33%) reported that Family support Programme helped in eradicating poverty in their area, while 10 (10%) were of the view that the programme created political awareness among women in the area.

**Table 4.4 – Motivation of Family Support Programme in Politics**

<b>Description</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Motivation of women to Contest Elections	35	36.0
Motivation of women to Vote	43	45.0
Encourage women to Speak in Public	6	6.5
All of the above	12	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey Results, 2011

Perception of respondents regarding motivation of Family Support Programme in politics is presented in Table 4.4. It shows that Family Support Programme had encouraged women to contest elections 35 (36%) of the respondents reported they receive motivation to contest elections, while majority 43 (45%) were encouraged to vote. Only 6

(6.5%) agreed that Family Support Programme encouraged them to speak in public prior to Family Support Programme women cannot express their opinion openly. These days some women are able to come out to support or oppose government programmes in Maru. Two women contested for elections to Federal House of Representative in 2011 elections but were defeated at primary election.

**Table 4.5 – Ways through which Family Support Programme Helped Women in Pursuit of Formal Education**

<b>Support in Education</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Free Education	50	52
Provision of Scholarship Help in Securing Admission	22	23
Others	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey Results, 2011

Survey results in Table 4.5 revealed that 50 (52%) are given free education in different schools in Maru Local Government Area. While about 19 (20%) of the respondents were provided scholarships. Similarly, 22 (23%) were helped in securing admission at various Institution of Higher Learning. These were the contributions of Family Support Programme (FSP) to encourage women's involvement in education.

**Table 4.6 – Health Services Provided by Family Support Programme (FSP)**

<b>Health Services</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Drugs	48	50
Health Education	34	35
Pre-Natal Care	14	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey Results, 2011

Opinion regarding health services provided by Family Support Programme is presented in Table 4.6. The results show that most of the respondents benefited from the drugs supplied by Family Support Programme 48 (50%), while 34 (35%) benefited from health education that help them to improve their health care. About 14 (15%) of the respondents enjoyed Pre-Natal care, women who were pregnant could not afford Pre-Natal and Post natal were provided by the programme

**Table 4.7 – Problems Affecting Family Support Programme**

<b>Problems</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Lack of Finance	40	42
Religious Problems	24	25
Illiteracy	13	13
Corruption	19	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey Results, 2011

Table 4.7 shows that lack of finance is considered by 40 (42%) of the respondents as a major obstacle that militates against the smooth operation of Family Support Programme. It was reported to the researcher that there were insufficient funds to provide the Vocational Training Centres the needed equipment/facilities such as knitting machines, sewing machines, and even manpower. About 24 (25%) believe that religious problems affect the smooth functioning of the programme. Similarly, 13 (13%) and 19 (20%) blamed illiteracy and corruption respectively to be responsible to the problems of Family Support Programme in the study area.

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Summary**

The aim of the study was to support sustain and empower the family through creation of economic activities. It was also set up to promote policies that strengthen the observance and protection of human right and the advancement of social justice and dignity. A total sample of four (4) wards out of ten (10) wards were selected. Ninety six respondents were selected out of the selected four wards to represent

the entire Maru Local Government. A total of 24 respondents were selected in each wards. Data collected from field survey via questionnaire were analysed using various statistical tools like frequencies and percentages. The results were presented as follows: -

### **Conclusion**

- (i) Analyses of data have shown that most of the beneficiaries of the programme 36 (37.5%) received amounts ranging from N40,000 to N45,000 as loans to establish their business. About 8 (8%) of the respondents received the highest amount N60,000 and above
- (ii) The Family Support Programme has achieved part of its goal in Maru Local Government Area. About 54 (56%) of the respondents reported that Family support Programme has made people self reliant while 32 (33%) reported that it helped in eradicating poverty. Only 10 (10%) reported the programme created political awareness among women in the area.
- (iii) Family Support Programme had encouraged women to speak in public prior to Family Support Programme women cannot express their opinion openly. Some women are able to come out to support or oppose government programmes in Maru Local Government Area.
- (iv) Through motivation given to women by the Family support Programme, two women contested for elections to Federal House of Representative in 2011 General Elections but they were defeated at primary elections.
- (v) Survey results have also shown that 50 (52%) of the respondents are given free education in different schools in Maru Local Government Area. While about 19 (20%) of the respondents were provided scholarships. Similarly, 22 (23%) were helped in securing admission at various Institution of Higher Learning.
- (vi) Opinion regarding health services provided by Family Support Programme have shown that most of the respondents benefited from the drugs supplied by Family Support Programme 48 (50%), while 34 (35%) benefited from health education. Only 14 (15%) of the respondents enjoyed Pre-Natal Care.

- (vii) Findings of this study will help to convince men to allow their women to participate in family Support Programme because of the achievements so far recorded. In addition the disinformation on Family support Programme such as religious and anti-Islam will be dispelled. It is expected that research study of this nature will help to add to the existing body of knowledge.

### **Recommendations**

Although the Family Support Programme (FSP) has achieved relative success in the study area, the results have identified a number of weaknesses and inherent problems. These flaws need to be addressed. Therefore, it is recommended that:-

- (i) Family Support Programme collaborates with private sectors like Banks, and NGOs in order to have more funds to carry out the programme adequately.
- (ii) Family Support Programme should establish more adult literacy Institutions most especially in rural areas which will be directed towards enhancing women education which will in turn facilitate women's appreciation of the programme.
- (iii) For efficiency and effectiveness, workshops and seminars should be organised for stakeholders such as community and religious leaders in order to encourage their followers to participate in the Family Support Programme.
- (iv) Family Support Programme must ensure that in future, Micro-credit facilities should be provided to poor women farmers in rural areas.
- (v) Family Support Programme should start agricultural programmes and supply quality agricultural inputs at reasonable rates to poor women farmers.
- (vi) Infrastructural development is needed in Maru Local Government Area so as to eradicate the level of poverty among the rural population.
- (vii) The family support programme in maru local government area should organize training programmes so as to enlighten them on how to solve their immediate problems.

- (viii) NGOs working for empowerment of women in maru local government area be given full support and cooperation so that they will be able implement their programmes for the benefit of women in the area. They should also include in their constitution training for small scale business.
- (ix) Family Support Programme should ensure that hardworking and serious women involved in poverty eradication should be given soft loans to establish small and enterprises in the area.

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