
**WOMEN AS AGENTS OF COMMUNITY
TRANSFORMATION: ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE
POST-CIVIL WAR DEVELOPMENT OF IGBOLAND,
NIGERIA (1970-2000)**

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Abstract

The primary focus of this paper is to discuss the pivotal role which Igbo women played in the overall transformation and eventual development of Igboland after the end of the disastrous civil war which crippled life and devastated the entire human and infrastructural facilities in the Igbo area. It addresses the fact that the Nigeria/Biafra civil war which ended in January 1970 destroyed the basic infrastructural facilities available in the Igbo areas, left the affected communities in terrible ruins, crippled economic lives of the people, and set the pace of development among affected communities terribly backwards. It is therefore the target of this brief paper to discuss the key developmental roles played by Igbo women in improving the infrastructural situations of that war-ravaged part of the country. At that, this paper adopts the qualitative method of data analysis in dealing with the

various segments of this text. Given the historical importance of the said war, the historical method of enquiry becomes relevant. This is considered crucial in view of the need to adapt the gender-specific terminologies required to capture the huge impact made by this group of Nigerians towards improving life and living condition among members of the affected communities of Igboland. To that end, it is the position of this paper that Igbo women created huge in-roads in transforming the infrastructural dispositions of the Igbo area soon after the war in 1970. The study further reveals that empowered with the relevant educational and economic tools, women are capable of orchestrating elaborate development projects, unassisted by their male counterparts. On the strength of these factors therefore, it is the recommendation of this brief paper that gender-based education should be mainstreamed into the national curriculum, with the aim of positioning women to contribute massively to community development.

Keywords: *Community, Development, Igboland, Women*

Introduction

In the annals of Nigeria's history, the period of 1970-2000 is quite remarkable and historic. The ugly footprints of the disastrous civil war which started on July 6th 1967 and officially ended on 12th January 1970 were still prominent in a number of Igbo communities several months after the war had been declared ended. The desperate call for aggressive investment in reconstruction activities in towns and villages remained quite loud. The ugly signs of destruction and devastation were still prominent in several towns and villages even though the guns of war had gone silent (Kirk-Greene & Rimmer, 1981).

That was an era when countless bodies of war victims were hurriedly interred in unmarked graves without family members around. The war period marked the era when the basic infrastructural facilities available in parts of Igboland were completely bombed out and unceremoniously grinded to a bitter

halt, thereby abandoning the entire Igbo landscape in great ruins. Put into context therefore, the period being focused on represented an era when greater majority of Igbo communities were in dire need of development and resuscitation to normal life.

After the guns went silent on that historic day of 12th January, 1970, families started counting their dead members. Communities mourned the loss of their cherished members and bread winners. Igbo towns and villages turned into ugly sights of destruction orchestrated by the incessant bombings occasioned by the bloody war between Biafra and the rest of Nigeria. Schools were in total ruins. Churches and worship centres were terribly destroyed. Markets were totally bombed out. Water pipelines were cut, even as water supplies to communities were abruptly disrupted. There were literally no supplies of electricity anywhere in Igbo communities. Postal services to Igbo towns and villages were truncated. Health facilities were in total ruins, and became empty shells of their former selves. Life turned into hell on earth as all basic services required for healthy living went out of existence (Oyewole, 1977; Madiebo, 1980; Kirk-Greene & Rimmer, 1981).

A popular common adage says that desperate situations require desperate measures. When the war officially ended with the Federal Government's pronouncement that there was "no victor, no vanquished", the desperate tasks of reconstruction of damaged infrastructures began in parts of Igboland and the rest of Nigeria devastated by the war. The hazardous tasks of rehabilitating families and their kits and kin commenced too, even as persons and communities gradually began to rebuild back their lives and economies once again. Communities started coming up once again, while reconstruction activities started springing up in nooks and crannies of the land, all with the intentions of creating some semblance of normalcy for themselves and their members (Madiebo, 1980; Njoku, 1980; Kirk-Greene & Rimmer, 1981).

It is without that the Igbo people of Nigeria are a very resilient nation. Geographically located in the southeast areas of the country, these are a people who have over the years been able to literally use their own hands to develop themselves, development rural communities, transform challenging developmental situations, and

invest aggressively in infrastructural development projects in their towns and villages without waiting endlessly on government assistance. For them, the spirit of “*ibuanyindanda*” (collective effort in problems solving) is still very resilient and remains a way of life. It was this selfless spirit of sacrifice and commitment to community development that gave birth to the tremendous infrastructural development recorded in Igbo communities within the first few years which heralded the end of the civil war in Nigeria in January, 1970 (Njoku, 1980; Maria Assumpta Cathedral, Owerri, Nigeria, 2005). People who have ever witnessed wars in their life time and the level of devastation and destruction they unleash on ravaged communities pray never to experience it. After the wars were declared ended by the General Yakubu Gowon-led military government, the entirety of Igboland remained in ruins. Undaunted by the magnitude of the destructions of infrastructural facilities all over the land, gradually, the next few years began to witness tremendous transformations in towns and villages. Damaged infrastructures, such as schools, churches and worship centres, markets, hospitals and medical facilities, power lines, road networks, residential homes, water supply lines, and telephone facilities began their lives of gradual repairs and replacements. Abandoned homes were restored. Refugees scattered all over the nation started returning to the towns and villages. Markets started their usual busy activities once again. Goods, including agricultural produce, started flooding different markets again all over Igboland. Semblance of normalcy started returning to a once war-ravaged nation (Madiebo, 1980; &Njoku, 1980; Maria Assumpta Cathedral, Owerri, Nigeria, 2005).

Thus, the speedy nature of the infrastructural developments recorded in Igbo communities went a long way in ameliorating the scars of war which affected communities and their members. Obviously, Igbo women, through the auspices of their various associations, were instrumental to the commitment of their folks into engaging in infrastructural development of their communities. Led by their educated members, Igbo women in different communities galvanized themselves into formidable community development agencies, all with the clear intentions of transforming the lives and living conditions of their communities.

On the strength of these factors therefore, it must be observed that a larger percentage of the womenfolk in Nigerian are illiterate. Consequently, this calibre of citizens are largely under-utilized, unempowered, marginalized, and highly vulnerable. Faced with these predicaments, their abilities to impact community and national development could be dampened. Their chances of transforming the living conditions of fellow citizens become mere illusions. This creates the false impression that the female populations of this country are inactive and docile. The indication is that education is crucial for the attainment of sustainable development anywhere in the world. Abandoned in a state of illiteracy therefore, people and communities grapple in the darkness of poverty, failure, economic dependence, and deprivation of rights (Ejeje & Ohiani, 2017). On the other hand, the hind lights of education are able and capable of injecting the much needed developmental elevation desired in rural and urban communities. This leads Agboeze (2011), in Ejeje and Ohiani (2017) to the conclusion that education is the backbone of any sustainable development. With these in context, one can only add that the involvement of educated Igbo women who operated through their various community-based women groups and associations in remedying the developmental level of the post-civil war Igboland, remains quite remarkable.

Having made these clarifications, it becomes crucial to underpin a few key factors. Women in Nigeria need comprehensive gender-based education in order to improve their conditions, economic relevance, and capability to contribute to community and national development. Nigerian women deserve to be strongly oriented to view education as the panacea to their overall empowerment, growth, and emancipation as bonafide citizens of this great nation. To that end, it is absolutely important that Nigerian women are accorded unhindered representations in the different sectors of the national economy, and should be better positioned to actualize their dreams and aspirations as free and equal citizens of Nigeria. The foregoing issues therefore define the specific objectives which this study intends to address.

The Concept of Women's Education

It has been admitted that education is quintessential to proper human development. It has also been globally acclaimed that the right to formal education is the right of all human beings on earth, irrespective of religious belief, location, or cultural systems families and communities may wish to engage in. These are indicators that education positions the recipients in the rightful positions to actualize their lifelong dreams, contribute massively to human capacity development, as well as equip them with the skills to contribute to sustainable national development. Therefore, the benefits of formal education could only be realized fully if all are given every support necessary to enable them acquire the necessary skills of literacy, without allowing the tools of gender to be applied negatively on the female populations under any guises (Iwunna, 2003; Ejeje & Ohiani, 2017).

This leads us to the understanding that in the world today, several families, homes, religions, and cultural communities often refuse their female children and wards the opportunities of enrolling into schools. In several places in these modern times, female children are unceremoniously withdrawn from school under some flimsy excuses. It is then not out of place that the practice of gender preference against female children is still fully practiced in some families and local communities. Unwarranted segregation against the female populations still remains persistent in some areas. Thus, under the pretext of some unqualified excuses, families easily withdraw their female children from schools, and rather send them off into premature marriages as brides of much elderly men who are old enough to be their own fathers and grandfathers (Okeke, 1989; Iwunna, 2003).

Putting these into context therefore, this brief paper accepts women's education as that educational policy framework which allows women and the entirety of female populations to enrol into formal education without any undue hindrances. It is that policy which supports women to enjoy their rights to formal education to the fullest. Educating a woman is a great asset to families and communities. Arming a woman with adequate formal education empowers her with the relevant skills and intellectual strength to

live a fulfilled life, manage any businesses of her own, run firms, engage in entrepreneurial ventures, become employers of labour, and an astute investor in human capacity development.

Ejeje and Ohiani (2017) agree with these positions with the argument that women's education has gone beyond the levels of equipping them with the skills which prepared them to be good wife materials who are able to manage their marital homes, raise children, and perform domestic chores flawlessly. Within the Christian circle, according to Njoku (1980), such women rightfully qualify to wear the title of "Missis," which was considered to be a rare title of honour among the women folk.

In line with these propositions, it becomes glaringly obvious that today's world has grown beyond the levels of secluding women and female children within the confines of the home environment. Today's world has gone viral and consequently places more demands on the female populations. In addition to taking care of the home, cook for the family, cuddle the kids, as well as perform several other domestic activities necessary to keep the home environment organized, they are also expected to establish strong financial bases and be able to make their own moneys, instead of being dependent on the generosity of family members (Iwunna, 2003).

Women therefore need every level of formal education to position them better to be able to make their own contributions in matters of community and national development. Without sound educational empowerment therefore, women become dangerously handicapped and effectively turn into some burden to their families. In order to really ignite the huge bundles of resourcefulness nature has endowed women with, it becomes crucial that they should be given every unhindered access to enrol into formal education anywhere in this globe, irrespective of any impediments the economic status of their families, cultural bias of their local communities, or religious beliefs of their families may seem to present. That being the case, the female populations desperately need sound formal education to empower them contribute powerfully to community and sustainable national development.

War as an Agent of Destruction and Devastation

That war is an agent of destruction and ugly weapon of death and misery is an undisputable fact. Authors and researchers have confirmed in categorical terms that wars never bring peace or provide justice. Wars rather create deeper enmities among communities and nations. Wars unleash horror and inestimable havoc. Wars never repair relationships. Rather the exacerbate violence and disunity. Most importantly, wars breed division and anarchy. Wars never bring total reconciliation among warring factions, neither do they create unbiased opportunities for genuine national integration. World nations where wars have been fought have always been left with gory stories of loss and total misery. The lessons of the Biafra/Nigerian civil war have been learnt, and have today provided strong references on the need for peaceful negotiations at all times (Madiebo, 1980; Odumegwu-Ojukwu, 1991).

From the above context, it becomes quite clear that peace has no better substitute under any guises. Peace is an icon which must be embraced at all times, and pursued in all circumstances without fail. Peace a nation builder. Peace is an advocate of development. Peace sustains growth, unity, and builds formidable bridges of oneness among nations. Speaking the language of peace heals old wounds, eliminates unnecessary build-up of tensions, and averts unwarranted loss of precious lives.

Through the deployment of the roundtable conference negotiations as the only substitute to reconciliation of seemingly confrontational subjects, fertile grounds are laid for the installation of peace and unity in the life of any nation. From the perspectives of the level of destruction of crucial infrastructure, and colossal loss of lives recorded in Igboland in the course of prosecuting the Biafra/Nigeria civil war, no one needs to be left in any doubt that wars rather complicate and compound worst situations as well as set nations backwards. Thus, in the language of Odumegwu-Ojukwu, (1991), the language of peace and reconciliation must be sustained by world nations always in order to enhance effective and sustained nation building.

Igbo Women's Impact on Community Development

It is without doubt that Igbo women in different towns and villages played prominent roles in the reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reconciliation projects launched by the Federal Government of Nigeria, headed by Major General Yakubu Gowon. Under the subheadings that follow, we shall make a brief discussion of the key areas of community development exacerbated by women groups and associations in parts of Igboland:

Farming and Food Production

The battle against hunger constituted one major cancerous challenge faced in homes and communities all over Igboland. Following the historic end of war and hostilities in January, 1970, there was severe scarcity of food all over the land. Hunger for basic food to fill the stomach remained serious nightmare to families. Providing food on the table to one's children and family members constituted another major battle fought in families. Scarcity of food in markets created terrible scenarios in homes. People literally struggled for days before they can make out any little food to put on the table in families. Fight against hunger became another worrisome battle which confronted the Igbo populations, most especially women and children (Madiebo, 1980; UNICEF, 1990).

Towards war of food scarcity aggressively, women in different communities of Igboland constituted themselves into various associations, cooperative societies, and farmers' clubs. Under the aegis of the associations, they organized themselves into several groups, and began to work on their members' farms in turns. Within such groups, they worked as a team, and planted food crops in the farmlands of their members. Behind this initiative was the target of aiding their member to increase food production, improve nutritional situations of families, most especially women and children. By that, many families were saved from hunger, destitution, and death (Kirk-Greene & Rimmer, 1981; Atimo, 1987).

Furthermore, there were cooperative societies exclusively run by women, which were driven by the targets of procuring farming crops for their members at cheap rates. The societies also organized local savings scheme for their members to bank little savings for the

rainy day from where they gave out interest-free loans to their members to enable them procure cash crops for planting. Behind these initiatives was the need to increase food availability, increase food production capacities in communities, as well as increase the distribution networks to different communities of Igboland (Iwunna, 2003).

Active Participation in Adult Literacy Programmes

The end of the Biafra/Nigeria civil war on 12th January, 1970 marked a period of increased percentage of illiteracy and semi-literacy rates among the adult populations of Igboland. This gory development was exacerbated by a number of factors which included the need to step away from all undue limitations that impede growth, access to better job opportunities, and the urge to heal the scars of the just ended civil war. Above all, the end of the war was conceded by majority of the people who survived the atrocities as a second chance to chart a new life and acquire new skills (Omolewa, 2006).

These became incumbent as the war adversely disrupted all educational activities in the regions of the southeast of Nigeria which formed the battle grounds of the war. Consequently, millions of adult males and females were forced out of schools. Schools were totally bombed out and utterly destroyed. In some communities however, children learnt under tree sheds, local community meeting halls, village squares, and other informal settings which were not conducive for teaching and learning activities. Most regretful was the forceful recruitment of teachers into the different sectors of the war, a situation which cost the lives of so many (Iwunna, 2011).

These developments had their implications on the literacy situations of the Igbo. A good percentage of adult males of females lost the chances of completing the educational careers forever. Families lacked the economic and material strength to enrol their adult members into schools. There was massive scarcity of available spaces in schools which returned to normal school activities at the end of the war. Consequently, a good percentage of adults had not chances of getting back to school. Reconstruction of damaged educational infrastructures took some very slow pace, and affected the figures of enrolments opportunities that were open to learners

in several communities. In the midst of these developments, adult persons whose schooling opportunities were truncated could not enrol into regular schooling again. For majority of them, securing a job in order to keep body and soul together became the only plausible option (Maria Assumpta Cathedral Owerri – Nigeria, 2005).

Towards completing the cycle of the rehabilitation project launched by the Federal Government of Nigeria at the close of the civil war in 1970, the adult education program got a fresh boost in 1990 in Jomtien “when the world undertook to provide education for all, including the adult population” (Omolewa, 2006). According to Nwabuko and Amanze (2017), the primary concern of the program was to enable adults to acquire the skills of reading, writing, and computation, which they required to perform their day-to-day activities at the work place, in their business areas, and private careers. This leads Omolewa (2006) to the conviction that “nature abhors stagnation and standing-still.” To meet up with the trends therefore, adult populations of Nigeria needed to be part and parcel of this post-civil war development.

Thus, the role of women in the prosecution and actualization of this task was enormous. They constituted the greater majority of the teaching force involved in the adult literacy program. These women traversed towns and villages where they sensitized adult males and females on the need to enrol into the program. In some communities too, the women provided material support to the teachers engaged in the project, with the intentions of boosting their morale. In other communities too, the women generated funds in support of the project within their communities (Maria Assumpta Cathedral Owerri – Nigeria, 2005). At the long run, many more adults acquired literacy skills, while others improved on their own capabilities to read, write, and calculate too.

Repair of Damaged School Infrastructures

The civil war in Nigeria was noted for the total destruction and bombing out of schools and educational infrastructures in towns and villages in the southeast areas of Nigeria. Bombed out of proportion, existing schools were forced to close down, while few others operated in improvised locations in different communities.

As was the case, such facilities such as community meeting halls, tree sheds, and other open spaces were terribly inappropriate for educational activities, and made teaching and learning extremely difficult for both teachers and young learners (Iwunna, 2011).

Towards remedying the situations, communities embarked on the self help project of repairing damaged school infrastructures. Through levies, voluntary donations, and other fund raising activities, damaged schools were brought back to life. Damaged infrastructures were repaired and put into better conditions, while missing educational aids were replaced. In all these activities, it is noteworthy that Igbo women played prominent roles. In collaboration with their male counterparts, they contributed funds, donated materials, and provided free labour in support of the various educational projects embarked upon by their communities. Following this collaborative effort, it was remarkable that school activities returned to normalcy soon after the war ended. The climax was that the period of 1970 – 2000 recorded aggressive refurbishment of damaged schools and educational infrastructures, while new ones also emerged in different towns and villages, with the effect that school enrolments increased dramatically (Onukogu, 1978; Maria Assumpta Cathedral Owerri – Nigeria. 2005).

Establishment of Health Centres and Maternities

Similarly, the end of the Biafra/Nigeria civil was also synonymous with the prevalence of several health challenges among citizens of different communities in Igboland. Several hospitals, maternities, and health centres were destroyed. There was dire scarcity of functional medical facilities in towns and villages. The few existing ones often operated without basic proper medications and services. Injuries from victims of war, malnutrition, diseases, and hunger became highly prevalent. These led to countless avoidable deaths in families and communities.

Towards tackling the menace however, women in different communities, in collaboration with churches, and communities, generated funds which were channelled to the restoration of damaged healthcare facilities. Through the auspices of various women's groups and associations in communities, generous

material, financial, and logistic support were generated for the purposes of returning life to damaged medical facilities in parts of the land (Iwunna, 2011; Iwunna, 2003; Maria Assumpta Cathedral Owerri – Nigeria. 2005).

Erection of Water Boreholes

The problem of portable water scarcity constituted one major problem faced by Igbo towns and villages after the end of the civil war in Nigeria. Owing to this dire complication, families and communities depended on ponds, rivers, and streams for their daily water supplies. Unfortunately several of such facilities were contaminated by the debris generated by the bombings and poisonous chemicals emanating from the war. Consequently, the problem of water-borne diseases became frequent in towns and villages. Cholera, dysentery, and typhoid fever, among others became pandemic among persons. In dealing with these complications therefore, women groups in different communities of Igboland collaborated with their male counterparts and embarked on the project of sinking boreholes. The initiation of this project was driven by the need to tackle the menacing water problem faced by Igbo communities, as well as putting an end to the prevalence of the health complications which ravaged communities (Njoku, 1980; UNICEF, 1990).

Peace and Conflicts Resolutions roles in Communities

It is without doubt that women also played prominent roles in resolving issues of conflicts among persons, families, and communities in different Igbo communities after the war had ended in 1970. United under various names, based on their different communities, Igbo women pursued peace and reconciliation in families and communities where unhealthy inter-human relationships were reported. Operating under the auspices of various women's associations and groups Igbo women were galvanized to pursue the common cause of peace making among spouses, communities, and kin groups in their different communities (Nzeadibe, 2015).

United under a common umbrella therefore, issues of conflicts, squabbles, undue marginalization of women, denial of rights of widows and indigent persons, widows' property rights violations, among others, which were rampant at the end of the civil war in Nigeria, were handled and amicably resolved by several women groups in parts of Igboland. Similarly, issues of moral failure among their members were also dealt with, while appropriate sanctions were meted out to defaulting members. Even, problems of the abuse of children, as well as indigent parents and families which became rampant during the period were also resolved amicably, thereby mending relationships within the community circle (Women's Aid Collective, 2002; UNICEF, 2002).

Creation of Entertainment Troupes and Dance Groups

Life in Igboland after the end of the civil war was quite hectic and extremely difficult. Living in Igboland became serious nightmare and stressful. Having survived terrible periods of devastation and destruction, as well as loss of precious lives and property, families barely struggled to keep alive. Towards making life worth living, Igbo women in different communities formed various entertainment troupes and dance groups. The creation of the various entertainment outfits organized and hosted by women emanated from the need to motivate the war ravaged people to begin to heal from the wounds of the ugly incident, forget the past, forge ahead with life, and embrace peace with one another (Iwunna, 2011; Achebe, 1982).

At that, several entertainment troupes and women dance groups sprang up from different communities. These were re-enforced through regular meetings of the womenfolk, while absentees to such crucial meetings were fined. With the full participation of the entire womenfolk therefore, larger fun was created, while talented artists saw fresh money-making open doors. Within the next couple of years however, Igboland produced a large number of musical artists, professional dancers, actors, and film producers, thereby encouraging the continued growth of the film and entertainment industry. These developments gave birth to the creation of a government department in the Ministry of Arts Culture

that is in charge of this industry in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Information & Culture, 1997; Nzeadibe, 2015).

Health Awareness Ambassadors

It is a common acronym that good health is better than wealth. It is also a known fact that knowledge is power. Thus, the end of the civil war in Nigeria marked the commencement of several health awareness initiatives in Igbo communities. The poor health challenges faced by Igbo families and communities motivated educated women, in collaboration with women organizations to embark on several health awareness drives aimed at ameliorating the terrible health challenges exacerbated by the just-ended civil war. At that, these health awareness ambassadors engaged themselves in the projects of establishing healthcare centres where children were taken care of. Within such facilities, food and medications were provided to the children to rescue their lives from the ugly crutches of kwashiorkor, which wiped away millions of children's lives between 1967 and 1970 (Madiabo, 1980).

As well, educated Igbo women, through the auspices of a number of women's organizations in different towns and villages, provided their folks with elaborate education on sex education, family planning, and the techniques of child spacing. In their opinion, this knowledge became highly crucial in order to preserve the lives of mothers and their children, reduce the frequency of maternal deaths which was rampant during the period, as well as empower women with adequate knowledge of their body systems. Most importantly, these ambassadors armed the women with the crucial information they required to avoid premature pregnancy, but rather educated them on the need to breast feed their new born babies properly before getting pregnant again (Llewellyn-Jones, 1993; Onyemerekeya, 2002).

In addition too, the end of the civil war in Nigeria marked the beginning of aggressive action and solidarity of Igbo women in the condemnation of the dreaded female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision, a debilitating culture practice which has negatively affected the sexual health of women in this part of the world and the rest of the African continent. Regrettably, the

perpetration of this cultural trend in parts of Igboland today contributes to the continued spread of infectious diseases among females, reproductive health challenges, deaths of unborn babies, and incessant maternal deaths among women of child bearing ages. Through the dogged efforts of numerous enlightenment teams of women in different Igbo communities, the battle against this negative cultural practice has been launched with severe aggression while maximum success was reported (Llewellyn-Jones, 1993; Onyemerekeya, 2002; Iwunna, 2003; Thompson, 2012).

Most importantly, the end of the civil war in Nigeria marked the formation of women-organized ethics and disciplinary teams in several communities of Igboland. Within the embers of these moral based committees, women were encouraged to imbibe the attitudes of strict moral discipline in their lives and relationships with their spouses and families. They were encouraged to avoid all acts of prostitution, promiscuity, and moral decadence, to enable them from contacting infectious diseases which were rampant after the civil war. Above all, they were made to know that maintaining a disciplined moral life would sustain peace and harmony in homes, most especially as the scars of the civil war were still glaring (Llewellyn-Jones, 1993; Iwunna, 2003).

Formation of Women's Rights Groups

The end of the Biafra/Nigeria civil was synonymous with the arrant denial of rights from some Igbo women, most especially, widows who lost their spouses in the course of the war. Several indigent and helpless women were also denied some of their legitimate rights during that period. At that, property rights were taken away from women who found themselves in these terrible conditions. In some families, such women were subjected to harsh and difficult conditions which made their survival and healthy living traumatic. Families denied such women all rights to their spouse's property, family land, and residential home. Subjected to such ugly conditions, widowhood and poverty became a curse and endless nightmare to affected women. Lack of family support and abandonment of women became the trend in some communities (Madiebo, 1980; UNESCO, 1990; Maria Assumpta Cathedral Owerri – Nigeria, 2005).

Challenged by these ugly developments, educated Igbo women, guided by women organizations in their communities embarked on the projects of fighting for the restoration of the rights of their members whose legitimate rights were trampled upon. To that end, several women's rights groups were established in churches and communities. These include the Catholic Women's Organization (CWO), Christian Women's Association, Women's Rights Initiative, Amuzi Progressive Union (APU) (Women's Wing), Women for Women, Nguru Women's Welfare Association (NWWA), Lude Progressive Union (Women's Wing), Women's Aid Collective (WACOL), Projects Alert, etc. Remarkably, these associations stood solidly behind their members whenever their rights were tampered with, to the extent that they often challenged such infringements in the courts at no costs to their members. As it were, the post-civil war era gave birth to the emergence of a number of women's rights advocates from different communities in Igboland (Okeke, 1989; Iwunna, 2003).

Participation in Road Maintenance Activities

Access to accessible roads became another predicament faced by communities during the post-civil war years in Igboland. Counting on the fact that the bloody civil war led to the total destruction of several road networks in this part of the country, putting them back to their former selves became herculean. Weeds overgrew several of the roads. Dangerous potholes and gullies devastated the available spaces. At that, road connections linking different communities were destroyed and rendered totally inaccessible. Communications and contacts among members of different communities became hectic. Challenged by these miserable infrastructural conditions, Igbo women took the bull by the horn. In collaboration with their male counterparts, they embarked on the recovery of all rural road networks within their communities. They sand-filled damaged portions of various roads, and weeded the overgrown parts of the various roads, thereby making them usable again (Ogbalu, 1974; Nzeadibe, 2015).

Conclusion

Obviously, women need the powers of education to perform better, acquire relevant economic skills, take care of their family needs, as well as contribute meaningfully to conscientious family and community development. Armed with the lights and tools of education, the sky no longer becomes the limit to women's ability and resilience to make the difference where indolence seems to occupy the driving seat, show the light where darkness looms, and fend for the family when joblessness and failure of investment fortunes hit their spouse. In Nigeria, just like the rest of the world, women desperately need the empowerments of education in order to function appropriately, contribute to farm growth and development, and play their natural roles as their men's helpmates. Empowered with the lights of education therefore, women go the extra miles in performing their roles as change makers and home builders with a taste. Based on this assertion therefore, one easily asserts that education makes women better women, polished persons, refined contributors, reliable partners to their spouses, and strong beacons of positivity. Therefore, there is every need to invest comprehensively in the education of Nigeria's female populations, irrespective of age, ethnic belonging, religion, and cultural affiliations. It is then a challenge to the Nigerian government to engage massively in the education of the country's female populations. This would no doubt reduce poverty, eliminate criminality, eradicate illiteracy, and position them on the right footings to contribute adequately to effective national development. With the tools of education at hand, women turn into enviable powerhouses of resourcefulness and icons of hope for the growth of their families and communities.

The Way Forward

There is no doubt that women are so resilient wherever they find the opportunities of displaying their natural gifts of making the difference where darkness seems to overshadow the light in an attempt to cripple the pace of development backwards. Nigeria is not in any way an exception. Towards supporting the female populations improve the quality of life and pace of infrastructural

development in their communities and the larger Nigerian nation therefore, it has become imperative that they are adequately empowered with high levels of education and equipped with varieties of skills. These would no doubt improve their economic weights, and impact their preparedness to contribute more positively to the infrastructural development of their various communities, empower their family members with a strong education, as well as contribute to genuine national development.

In order to make these feasible, the Federal Government of Nigeria must make more conscientious fiscal and infrastructural investments in the education of the female populations of this country. At that, it becomes suggestible that Nigeria's female populations deserve to be given adequate motivations that support them to remain in school. These include the introduction of the policy of according to the country's female populations the opportunities of enjoying tuition-free education at all levels within the country. In doing that, relevant legal frameworks and enforcement agencies should be put in place to penalize families and parents who deny their female children and wives the opportunities of enjoying free access to unhindered education anywhere in Nigeria.

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