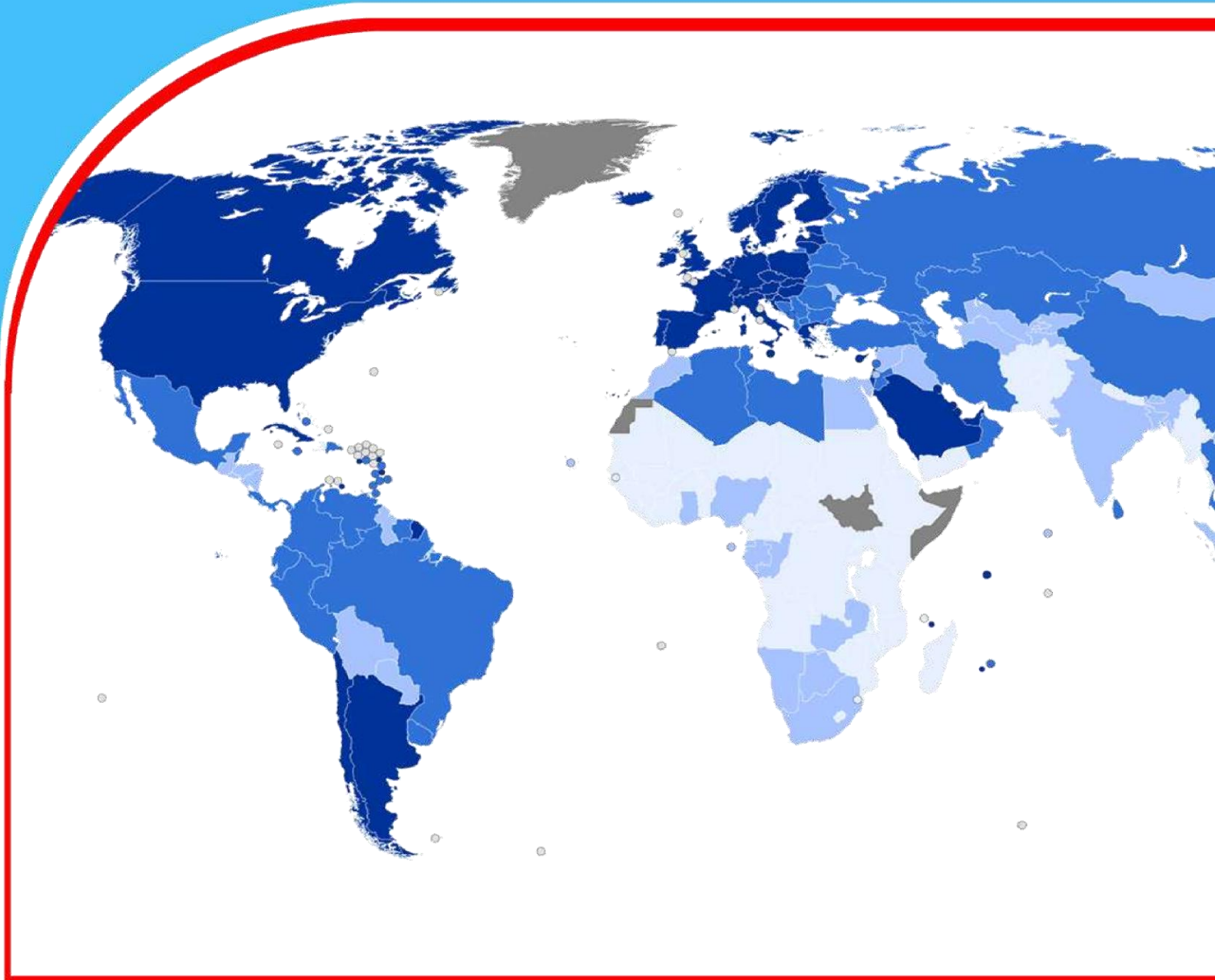


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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AMONG WOMEN IN IKENNE  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OGUN STATE; AN  
APPRAISAL OF PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS.  
1999-2019.**

*Sarah M. Audu  
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# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AMONG WOMEN IN IKENNE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OGUN STATE; AN APPRAISAL OF PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS.**

**1999-2019.**

Sarah M. Audu and Alexander Ugwukah

Department of History and International Studies, School of Education and Humanities, Babcock University, PO box 21244, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.

## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This paper takes an incisive examination of economic development with specific focus on some of the problems confronting the involvement of rural women in development activities in Ikenne Local Government.

**Methodology:** The paper addresses this issue through qualitative methodologies by relying heavily on Primary and Secondary Sources of data collection consisting of oral Interviews with selected rural women in the Local Government. Relevant Text books, Journals, and Internet Sources were consulted to corroborate evidences from the findings.

**Findings:** Although women have served as critical agents of rural economic transformation, such roles has been limited by illiteracy, lack of adequate finance, lack of processing and storage facilities, unsteady power supply, poverty. Their impacts have been felt indirectly in subsistent agriculture, and directly at the domestic domain. The role of women in the economic development of Ikenne Local Government Area in Ogun State cannot be overemphasized. This is because, there is basically no aspect of economic development in Ogun State that rural women would not be found. Generally, Ikenne rural women are majorly involved in agricultural activities such as planting, weeding, harvesting, processing and marketing. They also keep some domestic animals and birds. Rural women's limited access to productive resources, low educational level and illiteracy are contributors to rural women's poverty. The study discovered that Illiteracy affects extent to which benefits can be accrued from newer, non-traditional methods such as: information and communication technologies.

**Unique Contribution to Practice and Policy:** The research therefore recommended that rural women in Ikenne local government should be exposed to various economic platforms for knowledge mobilization, innovation, and partnerships for sourcing funds to carry out their economic activities. The work concluded that promotion of agricultural development should be through the provision of useful and relevant information to the farming communities by the extension services. There are many constraints making rural women farmers to be lagging behind economically, apart from lack of agricultural information. Further main constraints such as the lack of personal land and credit should be enhanced to suit the necessity of the rural women. Rural women are limited in terms of their potential in contributing to agricultural and socio-economic development.

**Keywords:** *Rural Women, Economic Development, Rural Economic Development, and Ikenne Local Government.*

## **1. Introduction**

Women and the role they play in achieving economic development cannot be overemphasized. This is because of the various activities they are involved in such as: marketing, trading, and artisan skills. Women can be empowered through the acquisition of diverse skills and trainings. Such empowerment programs will reposition them and better guarantee their access to credit facilities such as will make them independent and more productive. When women are empowered financially, they will be able to contribute to the overall development of their domain, as well as see to the overall well-being of themselves and their families.<sup>1</sup>

Women empowerment is a prerequisite for the improvement of women's socio-economic status quo. This can be achieved by entrenching an economic culture that fosters the equipment of women with technical know-how in diverse fields and involving women in various economic programs that will raise their living standards. Promoting women's economic empowerment is a driving force for economic development. Rural economic development can rarely be achieved without the effort and contribution of rural women.<sup>2</sup>

### ***1.1 Statement of the problem***

The Role of Women in Rural Economic Development has suffered neglect and criticisms in the past few decades. The Federal Government over the years established various programs and interventions to encourage women participation in Rural Economic Development. Examples of such programs include; Women Empowerment Program Scheme Synergy (WEPSS) established in 2013, to empower rural women through training in fashion design and tailoring. Government Enterprise Empowerment Program (GEEP) launched in 2016 with the aim of offering interest as well as free credit to Small and Medium sized business women (SME's), and also Non-Small and Medium sized business women (NSME's), Family Economic and Advancement Program (FEAP), been an empowerment program created particularly for local based producers of goods and services. It was established on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1997. National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP) introduced in 2001 with the primary goal of coordinating and monitoring of all poverty related activities in the country, and also tackle the key poverty gap in the economy. National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) established in 2004 with the aim of achieving sustainable growth and development as well reduce poverty.

To a large extent, it is doubtful if any of these programs have actually been implemented in Ikenne Local Government which leaves a question mark. Therefore, the problem which confronts this study is to establish to what extent the rural women has been able to resolve their problems in terms of utilization of intervention programs resolving their problems in the Local Government. In spite of all these laudable empowerment programs, several problems however still plague the adequate participation of women in Rural Economic Development, some of which are; education, ethnicity which could arise considering the fact that there could be bias based on the fact that there are non-indigenes of Ikenne Local Government Rural women residing in the areas. Geographical conditions such as good soil for planting. Furthermore, weather and climate condition of the area could affects the produce and the prices which pose as obstacles to achieving rural economic development. In light of these challenges, the research aims at interrogating the

problems confronting rural women in Ikenne Local Government as well as speculating prospects of Ikenne Local Government rural women.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective is to investigate the Economic Development among Women in Ikenne Local Government Area between 1999 and 2019. The Specific objectives of the study include:

- i. Investigating the place of women in rural economic development in Ikenne Local Government area between 1999 and 2019;
- ii. Investigating the factors that have impeded growth and development among rural women in Ikenne Local Government Area;
- iii. Assessing the achievements made by women in Ikenne Local Government in the period understudied and the overall relevance of such achievements, and
- iv. Proffering solutions to the obstacles/ challenges confronting the contribution of rural women to development in Ikenne Local Government Area

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The following research questions were tailored after the objectives:

- i. What are the major attainments of women in rural development between 1999 and 2019 in Ikenne Local Government Area?
- ii. What factors have affected growth and development among women in Ikenne Local Government Area between 1999 and 2019?
- iii. What have been the economic achievements of rural women in Ikenne Local Government from 1999 to 2019?
- iv. How were the roles of women in Ikenne Local Government Area improved upon to enhance the Area's economy and people's standard of living?

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The role of women in rural economic development cannot be overemphasized, as women dominate the agricultural, trading business and entrepreneurial circles, not just in Ikenne Local Government Area, but also in the country as a whole. Given that there is insufficient literature and research work on the subject matter, this will serve as a trailblazer for researchers on the roles played by women in rural economic development, in Ikenne Local Government Area.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial to the Government, as well as and Nongovernmental Organization. This is because it will enlighten them on ways in which rural women can be encouraged to contribute towards promoting rural development. This can be achieved by prioritizing strategies recommended in the findings of the study that can discourage gender inequality which has for long undermined the participation of rural women in economic development.

Women organizations, as well as rural women cooperatives in other local Government Areas in Nigeria would benefit from this research as it would guide them on how to effectively run their women cooperative societies and also benefit from them. Ultimately, the study will attempt

to improve upon the inadequacies discovered in the research. Furthermore, it will highlight the great impact rural women can have in promoting economic development in their localities and justify the need to continue in the fight against gender discrimination.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The research was carried out in Ikenne Local Government Area of Ogun State. Ikenne Local Government Area was chosen because there is scant literature on the role of women in the rural areas of Ikenne Local Government Area in economic development. The work concentrated particularly on Ikenne and Ilisan towns for the field work of the research in order to justify its feasibility. The two towns, Ikenne and Ilisan, were chosen because there is insufficient literature on the roles women in economic development. The time frame of the work began from the year 1999 which corresponded with Nigeria's democratic dispensation. This period revealed, to a large extent, the need to involve women in advancement programs and hence contributed to increasing their interest in local development programs. An example of such programs is the Better Life for Rural Women, established in September, 1987 by Maryam Babangida. Meanwhile, 2019, which is the terminal date of the work, was chosen to conform to the termination of Governor Ibikunle Amosun on May 29, 2019, thereby marking a 20 year scope of study.

### **1.6 Methodology**

The study adopted the qualitative method in collection of data. Sources of data used were primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included oral information (interviews) from prominent women, particularly traders and artisans, in Ikenne Local Governments Area. Other figures interviewed included the *Iyalaje* of Ikenne Local Government Area, the council chairman of Ikenne Local Government Area, and other enlightened patriots, including academics whose involvement served to add credence to the work. Secondary sources included journals, newspapers, periodicals, textbooks and online materials relevant to the study

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Rural Economic Development Conceptualized**

The scope of the concept of rural development is very wide. It is a multi-dimensional process involving such areas as agriculture, health, education, infrastructure, social life, political and economic issues, commerce and industry, among others, and their integration into the national economy. Aziz asserted that the concept of rural development should be viewed as a holistic concept which recognizes the complexity and inter-relatedness of the many variables that influence the quality of life in rural areas. It is a complex process which involves the interaction of economic, social, political, cultural, technological and other situational factors.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Mabogunje stated that rural development is concerned with the selfsustaining improvement of rural areas, and implies a broad-based re-organization and mobilization of the rural masses so as to enhance their capacity to cope effectively with the daily task of their lives and with the changes consequent upon this.<sup>4</sup>

### ***History of Ikenne Local Government Ikenne***

Ikenne local government area is in South-West Nigeria, Ogun State and has its headquarters in the town of Ikenne Remo. The local Government is one of the twenty (20) local Government Areas that makes up the present Ogun State in the South-West Geo political region of Nigeria. Ikenne Local Government was coined out of the defunct Remo Local Government on September 1991, it occupies a total area of about 137.13kilometres. Ikenne Local Government is bounded in the West by Obafemi Owode Local Government, in the South by Sagamu Local Government, in the East by Odogbolu Local Government and lastly in the North by Remo North Local Government. The Local Government comprises of five towns namely; Iperu-Remo, Ilisan-Remo, Ogere-Remo, Irolu-Remo, and Ikenne- Remo, which is the headquarters. The Local Government Area using 2006National population commission census figure was 165,700, while as at 2016 it was recorded at 202, 980 inhabitants with the predominant dwellers of the area being members of the Yoruba ethnic group. The Ijebu dialect of the Yoruba language is commonly spoken in the area while the religions of Christianity and Islam are widely practiced in the LGA. A number of festivals are held in Ikenne Local Government Area and these include the Oro festival while notable landmarks in the area include the Babcock University and the Ogun state Institute of Social development.<sup>5</sup> Rural women in Ikenne Local Government Area engage in farming activities such as crop production. Examples of such crops are: pepper, ewe, maize, cassava, and cocoyam. Rural women in Ikenne local Government are into crafts making such as broom. Some are artisans like tailors, hair dressers.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Theoretical Framework***

Human development theory was established in the1980s with the work of Amartya Sen and his Human Capabilities perspectives which earned him the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1998.The theory deals with the use of ideologies from various origins, notably environment, feasible advancement and standard of the economy. Its focus is on ways in which social capital can be explored to maximize the overall essence of human capital in an economy.

AmartyaSen and Mahbubul Haq are world famous human advancement theorists. The work of Sen is centered on abilities, which is what people have ability to do as well as what they can be. According to him, it is these capabilities, not the income they receive, that ascertain people's standard. The main ideology also informed the creation of the Human Development Index (H.D.I) which is a means of measuring development for humans championed by the United Nations Development Programs (UNDP) as stated in its Human Development Reports. This report has become famous world-wide. The financial aspect of Sen's work can best be subdivided into economic standard, which assesses the effects of financial strategies on the standard of living of people.<sup>7</sup>

### ***2.2 Socio-Economic Development in Ikenne town in Local Government Area***

There is no community that lives in isolation. Each community must incorporate some factors that will enable the community appear like others. These factors include social ones which comprise

festivals and other social celebrations, religious factors which comprise traditional worship, and economic factors which entail trade, commerce, arts and crafts. All the afore mentioned factors are visible in the socio-economic life of Ikenne communities. Socially, the town have the famous Ereke Day Celebration. The name, Ereke Day, was fashioned by the Ikenne Development Association (IDA). It is an annual festival which spans over one week filled with lined-up events. The festival begins on the first Saturday in November of every month, for two reasons. The first is that Ikenne Town Hall was officially opened on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1975, while the second is that November is the month in which harvest is carried out in Ikenne, besides the fact that a lot of festivities go on in the period and it would be an ideal time of the year to bring all sons and daughters of Ikenne home for a common purpose. The aim of Ereke Day, apart from celebrations, is to seat the townsfolk together to deliberate on the progress of the town. All age groups are mandated to contribute a certain amount in preparation for the Ereke Day celebrations. The first Ereke Day celebration was held on 5th November, 1977.<sup>8</sup>

Ereke Day celebration, since inception, has contributed to the socio-economic development of Ikenne. During each Ereke Day, for instance, different beauty pageants are organized among the town's young women. At the different venues of the celebratory activities, women from far and near bring their goods to be displayed and marketed. In fact, the Ereke Day is a period that the town's women and those of other towns always look forward to, as they make a lot of money from the sale of commodities during this time. Incomes that would have been generated over a week are usually generated in a day. Dignitaries from within and outside Nigeria, including prominent sons and daughters of Ikenne, always grace the event.<sup>21</sup> There are also arts and science exhibitions by pupils of different schools, exhibition of products by businesses owned by indigenes of the town, and commissioning of major communal projects such as the opening of a block of classrooms at Ansar-Ud-Deen Primary School during one of the previous celebrations. In addition, there is usually an agricultural products exhibition on modern farming techniques, including crop production, animal husbandry and aqua-culture. These exhibitions and events attract people from different locations and all walks of life such as: professionals. The participants always go back home happy because they are usually compensated. During the Ereke Day celebrations a lot of money is made from different donations as well sales of displayed items.<sup>9</sup>

#### ***2.4 Economic Programs in Ikenne Local Government Area and their Contribution to Rural Development***

The following are the various economic programs that women subscribe to in Ikenne Local Government Area specifically for the economic empowerment of rural women in the area. The first of such are the Cooperatives. Cooperative Societies are business organizations in which a group of individuals with common interests agree to come together to form the business so as to be able to promote their economic activities. Examples of such economic activities include production, distribution and marketing of goods and services, as well as provision of welfare schemes. Cooperative societies are known and recognized as one of the main institutional machineries for empowering the economically weak members of the society. Irrespective of the availability of such organizations, it is said that quite a number of rural women are either unaware

of their existence or lack the basic socio-economic requisite characteristics for full participation in such activities.<sup>10</sup>

There are different forms of cooperative societies in Ikenne Local Government Area. One of such organizations are the Consumer Cooperative Societies. They are formed by consumers who put their resources together in order to advance their interest in retail purchases. For instance, some shop owners under this arrangement buy consumer goods in large quantities from the manufacturers at factory prices and sell them at retail prices to members. Profits realized are then given to members as patronage rebates.<sup>11</sup>

There are also the Producer Cooperative Societies. These are made up of farmers or other producers who organize themselves by pooling their resources with the aim of engaging in large - scale production, as well as marketing of their products by themselves. Examples of Producer Cooperative Societies are the kola nut traders' association called Egbe Olobi and the *moin-moin* leaves farmers association called Egbe Elewe.<sup>12</sup>

Credit and Thrift Cooperative Societies also exist. These are formed by traders, artisans and peasant farmers who contribute money into a common fund in order to enable them raise investment, finance, as well as give members soft loans. The main aims of these cooperative are to imbibe a saving culture among members, in addition to offering credit facilities to members such as will enable them engage in economic activities.<sup>13</sup> An example of a credit and thrift cooperative society is the Agakanowo Women Cooperative Society which was established between 2013 and 2016.

Similarly, there are Multipurpose Cooperative Societies. These are organized by people with different business activities who come together and pool their resources in order to combine the various activities such as marketing of consumer goods, credits and loans. An example of such cooperatives includes the Industrial Cooperative Society which is organized by individuals who engage in specialized, skilled activities such as tailoring and hairstyling. Rural women in Ikenne Local Government Area also run multipurpose cooperative societies. For instance, there is the Ansar-Ud-Deen Women Multi-purpose Cooperative Society Limited. It was established on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2017. The cooperative started with thirty (30) members and started issuing loans to its members on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2017. The total number of members as at 2018 was Sixty (60). The cooperative helps members in purchasing household and business gadgets such as deep freezers, adding at least 10 percent to the items that benefit their society. The meetings day is last Friday of every month.<sup>14</sup>

Below is the income and expenditure table of Ansar-Ud-Deen Women Multipurpose Cooperative Society in 2018, showing how they generate their income and give out loans to members.

**Table 1: Income and Expenditure Account of Ansar-Ud-Deen Women Cooperative Society 2017.**

| Income              | Costs   | Expenditure                 | Costs            | Profits   |
|---------------------|---------|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Entrance fee        | 120,000 | Stationeries used           | 20470            |           |
| Development levy    | 120,000 | Entertainment               | 226200           |           |
| Sales of stationary | 10500   | Transport                   | 102000           |           |
| Loan form           | 500     | Education expenses          | 96000            |           |
| Lateness to meeting | 200     | Total income = 3, 831, 500. | Total = 444, 670 | 3,386,830 |
| Education fund      | 30000   |                             |                  |           |
| Monthly savings     | 3000    |                             |                  |           |

**Source: Statement of Account of Ansar-Ud-Deen Women Multipurpose Cooperative Society 2017**

The table shows the income and expenditure of the Ansar-ud-deen women Cooperative in 2018. According to the report, there are different avenues through which the cooperative generated its income, expended funds and made profits out of which loans were disbursed to members. Entrance fee for each member was two thousand naira (₦2,000) only, and since there were sixty (60) members, the total entrance fee was one hundred and twenty thousand naira (₦120,000). Each member paid a development levy of two thousand naira (₦2,000) per annum, totaling one million, four hundred and forty thousand naira (₦1,440,000). Stationaries were sold monthly at the rate of ten thousand, five hundred naira (₦10,500) only, and for the entire year they sold stationaries worth a hundred and twenty-six thousand naira (₦126,000).

Loan forms were obtained twice by forty (40) members at the rate of five hundred naira (₦500) only each. Five hundred naira multiplied by forty amounts to twenty thousand naira, then by 3 totals up to sixty thousand naira (₦60,000). It was observed that more than half of the members turned up late to meetings, which made deliberations on matters slow as other members were drawn back. The perpetual habit necessitated the payment of lateness dues.

Each member paid the sum of five hundred naira (₦500) as education fund monthly, so in a year a total of three hundred and sixty thousand naira (₦360,000) was realized. Each member saved ₦3,000 monthly which, multiplied by the total number of members, amounted to a hundred and eighty thousand naira (₦180,000), and for the entire year, summed up to two million, one

hundred and sixty thousand naira (₦2,160,000). Total income realized for the year was three million, eight hundred and thirty-one thousand, five hundred naira (₦3,831,500). Total expenses incurred for the year was four hundred and forty-four thousand, six hundred and seventy naira (₦444,670). Profits made was three million, three hundred and eighty-six thousand, eight hundred and thirty naira (₦3,386,830). It was from the profit realized that the cooperative was able to issue out loans to its members.

The Ansar-ud-deen Women Multipurpose Cooperative Society, through its loan disbursement scheme, generates income for its women members, thereby enhancing their dignity and raising their standard of living. The organization also helped to remove social stratification constraints among Ikenne Local Government Area's rural women by accepting membership of women from all tribes, class and religion. The interactions among the women in cooperative societies have helped to increase members' self-worth which, in turn, has helped them develop high self-esteem and confidence in their interactions with people of high socioeconomic standing.

## ***2.5 Achievements of Ikenne Local Government Rural Women***

In as much as there are advantages in agricultural and entrepreneurial efforts of women in Ikenne Local Government, yet there are some problematic factors of development in Ikenne Local Government. Some of the laudable achievement of rural women in Ikenne Local Government are: In the agricultural sector, rural women have been active in small scale farming activities such as vegetables like ewe, which supports the household and ensure food security, provide significant employment opportunities, and generate some income for other necessities. Another achievement is that Ikenne local Government rural women have contributed to the economic development of the rural areas. These contributions can be seen in the areas of trading. They trade with goods such as pepper, cassava, cocoa yams, yams, etc.<sup>15</sup> Rural women have been able to improve the standard of living of their families, as well as the rural areas through diverse agricultural practices which they are involved in. Examples of such practices includes: rearing and raising of livestock e.g. poultry farming where the eggs and meat gotten from the chickens are either consumed by the household or sold to make profit.<sup>16</sup> Crop production is another area in which the rural women have done tremendously well. Some of the rural women plant and harvest various crops for sales while a good number actually purchase them to resell. The profits realized from the sales of all the agricultural practices mentioned above are however used to see to the overall well -being of the family.<sup>17</sup>

### ***2.5.1 Problems faced by rural women in Ikenne Local Government Area***

Having highlighted few achievement of Ikenne Local Government Rural women the following are some of the problems confronting Ikenne Local Government rural women.

Women comprise the majority of the poor. They constitute the majority of unpaid productive workers through their labor on family farms and other domestic activities. Yet it is often times expected of them to cater for the nutritional needs of their families despite the constraints and limitations they have to face. Their productive capacity is also undermined due to their inaccessibility to productive resources such as land, seeds, and credit. In spite of their effort and

immense contributions to agriculture, rural women in Ikenne Local Government are still among the poor relegated groups in the local government. In Ikenne Local Government, women are relegated in various ways. In some homes, rural women have no say when it concerns family finance or even access to family finance.<sup>18</sup> In addition to the lack of agricultural farm equipment and land constraints, lack of support from their husbands can lead to the failure in their farm activities. Rural women success is minimal if the husband's all round support is lacking. In addition, some husbands may become stumbling blocks to their wives economic successes especially when they notice that they are more financially buoyant than they the husbands. This is one of the major problems hindering many Ikenne Local Government rural women's progress in life. It should also be noted that the economic improvement of rural women will lead to the improvement of almost all aspects of the family wellbeing, particularly the living standard of the family. Less attention is given to rural women farmers needs when compared to men farmers, with regards to the provision of agricultural extension services. These women are assumed to play the supportive role as farmers' wives and they are, therefore, most often neglected and not involved in the agricultural programmes.<sup>19</sup>

Rural Women's Constraints in Agricultural Production and Marketing; trading forms a vital aspect of the activities of the rural women of the Local Government. As evident, by the composition of women in the various towns, there are domestic and long distance traders. Primarily, articles of trade constitute the products from the family farms or plantations such as maize, yam, cocoyam etc. However, long distance traders get themselves involved in other purchase of durable modern article such as provision needs, soaps, and toiletries for women, clothing, beads, rice, beans and other food items which often fetch them higher yields and gains as distinct from the local domestic traders. The domestic traders notwithstanding provide vital food sources like garri, amala, fufu, cassava flour, rice flour. Rural women in Ikenne Local Government area have been found to play a major role in agricultural activities in the areas of food Production and marketing. Other constraints limiting Ikenne Local Government rural women's agricultural productivity are land tenure system, lack of access to loans, illiteracy, multiple family responsibilities. Many rural women may not have access to improved technologies and innovations, agro-chemicals and fertilizers which are essential for agricultural business.<sup>20</sup>

The Effects of illiteracy on Economic Development: Rural Women's Education in Agriculture, and Rural Economic Development is a vital instruments for enhancing food security and reducing poverty level. Women account for more than half of the world's agricultural production, despite this, the men folks have the upper-hand when it comes to training than women. Rural women of Ikenne Local Government tend to be disadvantaged compared with men because they have less education, capital and they cannot easily obtain credit. Education and training are prerequisites needed for the alleviation of poverty and starvation. Obviously, women that are educated have the tendency to be healthier, have better earnings and exercise greater decision-making powers within the household than the illiterate women<sup>21</sup>. Educated rural women also have the tendency of ensuring that their children are sent to school. This is because they know as well as understand the value and importance of education. Education and training are crucial to the improvement of

agricultural, and non-farm and economic productivity and reducing household poverty levels.<sup>22</sup> Education of women provides an instrument for integration into development and for promoting their contribution in the rural economy. Sound education can bring about change in behaviors, adoption of new technology in farming, creativity in handcraft and in food security.<sup>23</sup>

Lack of Inadequate Finance is another problem confronting Ikenne Local Government Rural women, there is the saying that goes money answers all things. An average Nigerian small scale or large scale business owner get loans from the bank to finance their businesses. Ikenne local Government is so poorly funded and this is a setback for the rural women in attaining economic development. The finance needed to boost their market sales is insufficient. As a result some Ikenne local Government Rural women resort to other avenues of raising capital to finance and increase productivity. The loan gotten from these financial institutions are often largely dependent on some factors which are; how much savings they have, and if they belong to any association.<sup>24</sup> However, rural women in Ikenne Local Government are also limited by Lack of processing and storage equipment: Ikenne Local Government rural women do not have the needed funds to purchase the highly advanced processing and storage equipment. Hence, those involved in sales of perishable goods often resort to local way of preserving their food items and consumables. Often times the rural women are at the receiving end this is because they don't have the needed facilities to store their consumables and this comes with some consequences which the rural women suffer. The consequences includes: becoming pressurized to quickly sell off their consumables and to achieve this they sell at a loss because they want to sell before the consumables get spoilt. Some perishable items still get spoilt along the line. The perishable items loses its freshness and vitality and it is this freshness that attracts customers in the first place. When the freshness is no longer there the trader loses most of its customers and eventually runs at a loss.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, unsteady power supply is another hindrance to rural women in Ikenne Local Government. In Nigeria generally, the issue of unsteady power supply has been a major cause of concern. This is because it affects both small and large business enterprises, thereby resulting in ineffective sales which often times brings about loss of customers. However the result is reduction in profit margin as well as poor output. Rural women in Ikenne Local Government are not financially buoyant to get generator and use as a substitute, their businesses is at the mercy of power supply which is not even stable.<sup>26</sup>

## ***2.6 Achievements of Rural Women in Ikenne Local Government Area in Social and Economic Development***

Despite the numerous challenges that rural women in Ikenne face in achieving rural socioeconomic development, they have, however, recorded some remarkable success.

In the agricultural sector, rural women have been active in small-scale farming activities such as the cultivation of vegetables like *ewe*, which support the household and ensure food security, provide significant employment opportunities, and generate some income for other necessities. Another achievement by the women of Ikenne Local Government Area have is in the commercial sector (trade). These women trade in goods such as pepper, cassava, cocoyam, yam, etc., and this

serves to boost the economy of the Area.<sup>27</sup> In the area of education, the rural women, through their entrepreneurial efforts and industrious lifestyle, have been able to send their children to school even up to the tertiary level. Some Rural women need not wait for their husbands to carry out his fatherly responsibility before their children are sent to school. Also, through the proceeds derived from sale of kola nut, the rural women are able to build houses for themselves and even some for rent. An example of a rural woman who sponsored and is still sponsoring her children to school is Mrs. Olatunbo, a 65-year- old kola nut trader. She said that the profits from her kola nut business was what had helped her in seeing her children through school.<sup>28</sup>

In the area of politics, rural women are beginning to participate more. Some rural women have become women leaders of associations and cooperative societies, while others hold some positions in the political arena. Examples of rural women in Ikenne Local Government Area who hold some exalted positions are Alhaja Rasaki Serifat who is the president of Ansar-Ud-Deen Women Multipurpose Cooperative, and Alhaja Akinlaja Sotikare who is the president of Ogun Women in Cooperative (O.W.I.C). These rural women make decision that affect the socioeconomic and political sectors of the Area.<sup>29</sup> Rural women have been able to improve the standard of living of their families, as well as their rural areas, through diverse agricultural practices which they are involved in. An example of such practices includes poultry farming which produces eggs and meat both for domestic use and for commercial purposes.<sup>22</sup> Crop production is another area in which the rural women have done tremendously well. Some of the rural women plant and harvest various food crops for sale, while a good number of them purchase the commodities to resell. The women use the profits realized from all the agricultural practices mentioned above to see to the overall wellbeing of their families.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, rural women have been able to create job and empowerment opportunities in diverse ways. For instance, the women who are into large-scale kola nut business will require the services of extra hands to handle the preparation of the nuts before taking them to the market for sale. The preparation processes includes washing, peeling, sorting and packaging/storing of the nuts in baskets. These processes can last for weeks, depending on the quantity of kola nuts. The extra hands that will be engaged is a form of employment creation, because the laborers will always get paid for services rendered, and this serves to better their livelihoods and reduce the burden of job creation on the government.<sup>31</sup>

Another area through which rural women in Ikenne create job opportunities is the operation of restaurants or *bukatarias*. This is a major source of employment for people in Ikenne Local Government Area, as operators go beyond their immediate families and employ non-family members, depending on the scale and patronage level of the business. In Ikenne virtually all streets have hawking and stationed food vendors rendering feeding services.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, through various associations, *ajo* and cooperative societies in Ikenne Local Government Area, rural women have been able to empower one another in terms of raising funds or soliciting funds. Also, rural women have created empowerment opportunities in the form of those in artisanship such as tailors, hair stylists etc. Most of these skills require extra hands because

of how demanding and tasking the vocations are. One can hardly find any tailoring or hairdressing shop with just one worker. Apprentices are engaged to render assistance and after a particular period of time, they become bosses of their own, having gained so much experience from their bosses. The circle continues as every apprentice becomes her own “*oga*” or “*madam*” and employs other people. In this way, more and more people, especially women, of the Local Government Area will become employed and empowered, and the availability of basic services will increase, towards the overall improvement of the people’s living standards.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, the rural women of Ikenne have contributed to the economic development of Ikenne Local Government area through crafts such as broom making, soap making and cloth weaving, and local industries such as local bakeries in Ikenne.<sup>34</sup> Some rural women are also self-employed in small-scale businesses such as the operation of provision shops in their houses. This has encouraged the upbringing of their children in the business and reduced youth restiveness. The businesses also help to cater for the daily needs of families, thereby raising the living standards of such families. Some rural women in Ikenne have other businesses besides in-house provision shops. This enables them make more profits. The children are usually the ones who run the in-house shops when the mothers go about their other businesses.<sup>35</sup> In the area of public health, some rural women in Ikenne serve as traditional birth attendants who, in the long run, become professional midwives. Some process midwifery certificates and are even recognized by the state government. These midwives render assistance to their fellow women during childbirth. The rural mid-wives serve as the last resort in emergency child birth to reduce child mortality rate.<sup>36</sup>

In the area of infrastructure development, rural women in Ikenne have groups of common interests. Such groups are usually based on religion, notably Christian and traditional religions. A major interest of the groups is to empower one another financially, while also rallying around for one another in times of difficulty. Such interests often translate to building infrastructure such as schools and health centers that have become necessities for the rural dwellers. In the area of sanitation, rural women of Ikenne have also contributed to ensuring that the rural areas are kept clean. They form groups and set aside days for sanitation and take turns in sweeping and keeping the environment clean and tidy. The rural women have a timetable for sanitation.<sup>37</sup>

## ***2.7 Prospects of Rural Economic Development among Women in Ikenne Local Government Area.***

In few years from now, about forty percent of Ikenne rural women will be at the fore front of politics heading different groups, associations. There will be more graduates produced from Ikenne Local Government Area, this is because the rural women use the money realized from their trading business especially kolanut to train their children in school from kindergarten even up to tertiary institutions. Furthermore, there will be a high number of landlady’s amongst rural women in Ikenne Local Government Area. This is because it can be said and seen that four out of ten rural women have houses built with proceeds from their kolanut businesses.

Moreover, Ikenne Local Government area will have numerous cooperative societies formed by the rural women and also being managed by them also. Ikenne Local Government rural women

will have more female farmers engaged in different farming activities. This is because at present they are a lot of female traders into different lucrative farming businesses. Unemployment will be minimal as a result of more empowerment opportunities resulting to creation of jobs. The establishment of small and medium scale entrepreneurs will be on the increase. There is no gain saying the fact that there is hardly any house in Ikenne Local Government area that one will not find or spot an in- provision store. In the nearest future, it can be predicted that all houses in Ikenne local Government will have provision store to aid easy accessibility of daily needs. Crafts and local industries will also be on the increase. Therefore, the living standard of rural women in Ikenne Local Government area would improve drastically in years to come.

### 3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Findings from the study revealed that rural women in Ikenne encounter limitations which hinder them from promoting economic development. These limitations include; lack of adequate finance, unsteady power supply, lack of proper storage and processing equipment's, and the effect of illiteracy on development. Findings from the study also revealed that the achievement of rural women in Ikenne far outweighs their limitations. Findings of the study revealed that the nature of rural development in Ikenne Local Government is neglected by not just the federal, state but even the local government whose role has been minimal.

#### 3.1 Conclusion

The role of women in rural and economic development has roused attention in recent times. At least it can be said that one third of the world's rural households are spear-headed by women whose productive responsibilities provide for the entire family, rural areas and formal and informal economies. Ikenne Local Government rural women are key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards the achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. Therefore, empowering them is essential not only for the well-being of individuals, families and rural areas, but also for overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural workforce of not just Ikenne Local Government but worldwide. From history, women are known as key agent of a Nation's economic development. Starting from the smallest unit which is the family, to the larger society, women are prominent in all aspects of human activities that brings about development. Rural women particularly in Ikenne Local Government constitute the bulk of the rural population however, they face lot of challenges and constraints which tend to deter their economic potentials in contributing meaningfully both to themselves and to rural development. The research therefore concludes that the living standard of Ikenne Local Government rural women is high and is rubbing off on the local Government area. Also, more economic programs and policies need to be formulated, implemented and prioritized so as to increase credit facilities. This will go a long way in ensuring that Ikenne Local Government rural women maximize their economic potentials and achieve better rural sustainable economic development.

To enhance women empowerment and achieve rural economic development, the following actions are recommended:

1. The Ogun State Government should build a strong leadership and participation platform for rural women in shaping laws, policies, and programs on all issues that affect their lives, including improved food and nutrition security, as well as better rural livelihood. The government should also provide trainings to equip women with more skills to pursue new means of livelihood and apply technological innovations to their needs.
2. In order to help the rural women of Ikenne Local Government Area escape poverty in the coming years, the state government should further expose them to the opportunities provided by relevant international organizations like World Food Program, Food and Agricultural Organization and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

These organizations can launch rural programs to empower the rural women through economic integration and food security initiatives.

3. The Rural women of Ikenne Local Government Area should be exposed to various economic platforms for knowledge mobilization, innovation and partnerships. This will serve to revitalize economic empowerment by building connections among women, not only in the local Government Area, but also with individuals and groups from other Local Government Areas. This will broaden and strengthen their connections with those that have more economic power and resources.
4. Rural women of Ikenne Local Government Area should be given the necessary guidance and links to benefit from Programs of the United Nations and other empowerment bodies through government, non-governmental organizations and private individuals/bodies. Awareness should be created for the women as to wherever there is an existing empowerment program. This will enable the rural women take advantage of such opportunities and get empowered. Creation of awareness is important in every issue pertaining to global challenges. The awareness should center on what women empowerment is, its relevance especially to the women folk, and ways of achieving it.

### ***3.3 Contribution to Knowledge.***

1. The study has provided a comprehensive assessment of the social and economic activities of rural women in Ikenne Local Government and how these activities have contributed to the economic development of the local Government.
2. It has portrayed precisely the relevance of rural women cooperative societies in not just Ikenne Local Government, but also in other Local Government Areas in Nigeria, and also how rural women can be beneficiaries.
3. The study is contributory to existing source materials in Economic history and Economic development.

### ***3.4 Suggestions for Further Studies.***

Based on the findings of this research, the following topics are advanced for further studies:

1. The contribution of Non-Governmental Organizations to the economic empowerment of rural women in Ikenne Local Government Area.
2. The contribution of Co-operative societies in promoting economic activities in Ikenne Local Government Area.
3. The role of Government agencies in the economic empowerment of rural women.

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