

EMPOWERED WOMEN: THE VOICE OF THE VOICELESS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES OF ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Women are major players in ensuring households wellbeing in rural communities of Abia State. The capacity to improve their livelihoods is hampered because they are disempowered economically. The study investigated the effect of empowerment on their livelihood activities in their various communities. Abia state is made up of three agricultural zones and 17 local government areas. Multi stage sampling procedure was used in the selection of 120 respondents. Data were collected through Focus Group Discussion and analyzed with descriptive statistics. Results indicated that majority of the women were married (63%) and mainly farmers (56.0%), a good proportion (55%) of the respondents had no formal education, a household size of (5 – 7). Benefits of the training received by the women in their various communities revealed that the women can grow more food ($\bar{x} = 3.68$), mentorship ($\bar{x} = 3.41$), rebuilding after crisis ($\bar{x} = 2.84$), help organize cooperatives ($\bar{x} = 3.48$), among others. The study revealed that training conducted for the women were associated with higher levels of access to savings and credit, self-confidence; making the ‘former’ voiceless groups to be heard by their communities