

NELLY NDAGUBA: A RESULTS-BASED CASE STUDY IN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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SYNOPSIS

The role of women entrepreneurs in increasing equality and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth cannot be overemphasized. Consequently, women have been encouraged to participate actively in both formal and informal sectors of the economy as a way of promoting, facilitating and supporting gender mainstreaming in Africa. This study employed a qualitative approach to narrate the achievement story of a successful Nigerian female entrepreneur, Mrs. Nelly Ndaguba in the area of agriculture-based business. It used semi-structured interview, discussion and documentary evidence to execute its concerns. The study identified lack of access to credit from formal financial institutions, land, pure water for processing Shea Butter, competition from men, lack of aluminum utensils for butter processing and laboratory for testing and analyses to enhance quality control, as well as the Boko haram insurgency in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria as some of the challenges encountered in Shea Butter production. Her success in surmounting these challenges arose from participation in credit and thrift cooperatives; standardization and participation in national and international capacity building training workshops among other factors. The study also found that about 105 women are directly employed and empowered by Mrs. Ndaguba's Shea Butter production in addition to the many women that are indirectly employed by her. Her enterprise also facilitates sustainable livelihoods arising from the increased participation of women in Shea business. It recommends that African governments and their development partners should promote gender balanced entrepreneurship through capacity building, gender-sensitive development assistance and equitable development policies. Furthermore, promoting women entrepreneurship and empowerment should therefore be the bedrock of African Union development programmes. It is hoped that the results of this case study would aid national and international institutions in Africa in developmental decision-making in line with Managing for Development Results (MfDR).

Introduction

The Nigerian economy has benefitted from the activities of women in business. When women succeed in business, the economy grows and when they fail, there are negative consequences from the loss of profit on families and the society. There are attempts on the side of government to encourage women to prevail in business. This is subsequent from the fact that, when women succeed in business, the society undergoes growth and development. Many women have succeeded as entrepreneurs despite the hard economic climate of Nigeria. Nwoye (2011) submits that women succeed

as well as men in business and 'compete favourably' with men. It is therefore claimed that women take part in business on an equal footing with men. One of such women is Mrs. Nelly Osagie Ndaguba. Through her we see the need for more women entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

There is also need for women to function alongside men in the world of business. Many women suffer the gross lack of coordination by fellow women to address their peculiar needs as women entrepreneurs. They labour under the burden of patriarchy. Peter Custers observes that "given patriarchy, women's relations to the means of

production are different from men's" (1997:24). Given the foregone highlights, it is necessary to identify and highlight the particularity of Mrs. Nelly Ndaguba as a successful woman in business. This results-based case study showcases a success story in entrepreneurship, production, marketing and exportation of Shea butter.

Born in Benin City, Nigeria in 1958, Mrs. Nelly Osagie Ndaguba is the leader of Shea butter processors in Nigeria. She leads men and women, in the sphere of Shea butter production in Abuja, from where she holds forth in the management of her other business of producing natural oils. She is an epitome of women who engage in small and medium scale businesses and make profit that continues to sustain their families and communities. However the experiences of women and men in business are not similar. Cultural barriers and patriarchal challenges often hinder the success of women in business, and have led to the failure of many businesses. While men have access to credit and support systems, it has not been easy for Nelly Ndaguba to enjoy these. (Interview, 24 April, 2016). Where a woman succeeds in business, it is clear that these and other challenges especially in the areas of decision-making and risk taking were faced and surmounted.

Methodology

This study focused on Mrs. Nelly Ndaguba as a result story for women entrepreneurs. The case study research employed qualitative approach to narrate her success story. Osuala (2005:189) view on qualitative research is that its charge is to "capture what people say and do as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their world to understand events from the viewpoints of the participants". This method enables the researcher to access outlooks of the field. The study employed the use of semi-structured interview, discussion and documentary evidence usual in case studies, to execute its concerns. The location of the study is Abuja in the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria. Two major activities took place. The first was a

discussion with the respondent via telephone calls and personal contact, and the second activity involved a semi-structured interview with the respondent in April, 2016.

Literature Review: Women in Business

According to the ILO (2014), while 22% of men's productive potential is underutilized, women's is as high as 50%. Apart from being under-represented in enterprises of all sizes, the bigger the firm, the less likely it is to be headed by a woman (ILO, 2014). Societal attitudes and norms inhibits some women from starting a business, and systemic barriers confined women entrepreneurs to very small businesses in the informal sector of the economy. These constraints are further aggravated by the aggressive business environment with rapidly changing technologies and the globalization of production, trade and financial flows (UNIDO, 2001). In addition, the traditional role of women as wives, mothers and care takers of the family also inhibit their ability to earn income for themselves and impedes them from realizing their full potential to contribute to job creation and socio-economic development. According to Adesua-Lincoln (2011), the interplay of different factors in the business environment for women results in women lagging behind their male counterparts in business. The World Bank (2016) in a recent survey that mainly used the Enterprise Surveys Global asserts that 'benchmarking' women's involvement in business possession, leadership and management of the workforce is crucial to gender parity and the empowerment of women. Registered firms with 5 or more employees were interviewed. Indicators were utilized to gauge women's participation in over 130,000 manufacturing businesses in over 135 countries in 2014. Data on Nigeria is revealed in Annexure 1.

Nigeria is behind in the Regional and All-Countries average of percent of firms with female participation in ownership and firms with female top manager mainly. Among the myriad of factors

