

EXPLORING WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE GROWTH OF JOS, PLATEAU STATE: A 1999-2023 ANALYSIS

Grace Adedayo Olamide and Samuel Oluwaseun Okunola

Department of Religious and Intercultural Studies, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines the contributions of women to the development of Jos, a city in northern Nigeria, despite facing various challenges. Using a qualitative research approach, including indepth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, this study reveals the significant impact of women's participation in trade, agriculture, and small-scale enterprises on the city's economic growth. Additionally, women's roles in promoting education, healthcare, and social welfare programs have improved the lives of countless individuals. Furthermore, their involvement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts has fostered harmony and stability in the city. This study highlights the agency, resilience, and dedication of women in shaping Jos' social, economic, and cultural landscape.

Keywords: Community Engagement, Economic Development, Peace Building, Social Impact, and women's Empowerment

Introduction

Jos, the capital city of Plateau State in Nigeria, has undergone significant transformation and development over the years, with women playing a vital role in this progress. Despite facing various challenges, including gender-based discrimination and limited access to resources, women in Jos have made substantial contributions to the city's economic, social, cultural, and political development (Abdullahi, 2017; Bent, 2015). This paper explores the multifaceted contributions of women to the development of Jos, highlighting their roles, challenges, and achievements in various sectors.

Women in Jos have been instrumental in driving economic growth through entrepreneurship, innovation, and job creation (Chukwu, 2019). They have also made significant strides in education, healthcare, and community development, improving the lives of countless individuals and families

(Bature, 2020; Yohana, 2018). Furthermore, women in Jos have played a crucial role in preserving and promoting the city's cultural heritage, showcasing its rich history and traditions (Mankilik, 2016).

Despite these contributions, women in Jos still face numerous challenges, including gender-based violence, limited access to education and healthcare, and underrepresentation in political and leadership positions (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 2018). This paper aims to highlight the achievements of women in Jos, while also acknowledging the challenges they face and exploring strategies for addressing these issues.

Clarification of Terms

Community Engagement: Refers to the process of building and maintaining relationships between community members, organizations, and stakeholders to promote collective action and social change (Putnam, 2000).

Economic Development: Encompasses the improvement of economic well-being and quality of life for individuals, communities, and societies, often measured by indicators such as GDP, poverty rates, and employment (Todaro & Smith, 2015).

Peace Building: Involves efforts to establish and maintain peace, particularly in post-conflict settings, through activities such as conflict resolution, reconciliation, and social cohesion (Lederach, 1995).

Social Impact: Refers to the positive or negative effects of actions, policies, or programs on social structures, relationships, and outcomes, including education, healthcare, and social welfare (Berkowitz, 2017).

Women's Empowerment: Encompasses the process of enabling women to gain control over their lives, resources, and decisions, promoting autonomy, self-determination, and equality (Kabeer, 1999).

Women's Identity in Jos

Jos is a patriarchal society. Thus, women are always identify as weaker vessels and are subject to men. The first operation domination and marginalization (Napbut 2023). Jos as cosmopolitan city and the women are identify as follows:

Cultural Identity: Women in Jos are from various ethnic groups, including Berom, Hausa, and Igbo, each with unique cultural practices and traditions (Okpewho, 2017).

Religious Identity: Women in Jos practice Christianity, Islam, and traditional religions, influencing their worldview and community engagement (Hackett, 2016).

Socio-Economic Identity: Women in Jos face challenges like poverty, limited education, and unemployment, shaping their experiences and contributions (Adeyinka et al., 2017).

Political Identity: Women in Jos are increasingly involved in politics, advocating for gender equality and social justice (Tripp, 2015).

Challenges Faced by Women in Jos

The challenges faced by women in Jos are such that is faced by women in patriarchal societies. A patriarchal system is characterized by unequal power relations between women and men (Ekpenyong et al., 2017). In such societies, women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed. The males hold power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of the property (Obiora and Onwuyi 2018). These political systems using cultural practices make the Nigerian communities essentially patriarchal (Offiong 2019). This is because the social and cultural laws are stipulated by men without any input of the women, even though women make up a significant percentage of the population (Olojede 2004). Thus, the political, economic, social, and personal interests of women are often underrepresented and undervalued (Henderson, Jeydel 2010: 9). Furthermore, power and resources within the society are distributed in such a manner that men maintain power and the control of resources while the women are powerless and dependent on the men as stipulated by their culture (Oyekanmi 2011). Specific challenges face by women in Jos includes the following:

Gender-Based Violence: Women in Jos experience high rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Limited Access to Education: Women in Jos face barriers to education, including early marriage, poverty, and cultural restrictions (UNESCO, 2019).

Economic Empowerment: Women in Jos encounter challenges in accessing credit, markets, and economic opportunities (Adeyinka et al., 2017).

Political Representation: Women in Jos are underrepresented in politics and decision-making positions (Tripp, 2015).

Cultural and Religious Restrictions: Women in Jos face cultural and religious constraints limiting their autonomy and agency (Hackett, 2016).

Women's Roles in Jos

The women are considered a “second class citizen and a times looked open as a child” (Rhoda Mandong, Oral Interview) however, the women play a lot of roles which includes the following: **Caregivers:** Women in Jos play a crucial role in caring for children, the elderly, and the sick (Olabisi, 2017).

Entrepreneurs: Women in Jos are increasingly involved in small-scale enterprises, contributing to the local economy (Adeyinka et al., 2017).

Farmers: Women in Jos engage in agriculture, producing food for their families and communities (Eze et al., 2018).

Community Leaders: Women in Jos hold leadership positions in community organizations, promoting social change (Tripp, 2015).

Peace builders: Women in Jos play a vital role in conflict resolution and peace building efforts (Hackett, 2016).

Home managers: they have foresight and know how to plan and manage the resources of the family (Juliana David, Oral Interview).

Women in the Development of Jos:

Igwe and Ateke (2018) provides that development is a process that results in improved quality of life and which ensures that everyone has access to basic necessities of life; and the opportunity to make choices. To Nwulu and Ateke (2014), development is a growth process that enable society meet specific economic growth and human development requirements, including health, education, and clean environment by systematically employing technical knowledge. Thus, development means change or planned social, political, and economic development growth. Riggs (1976) it is the process of increasing the autonomy (discretion) of a social system, using levels of diffraction. Tewe (1978) suggest that development policy must include (1) creation of a general condition of development; (2) awareness of development potentialities and advantages; (3) basic government instrument; (4) take steps to encourage and facilitate private activity; and (5) development of policy under varying circumstances.

Economic Development: Women in Jos contribute to the local economy through small-scale enterprises, agriculture, and trade (Adeyinka et al., 2017).

Jos women are very industrious. They are into various forms of commercial activities. They are into farming especially poultry, vegetables such as; tomatoes, pepper, cucumber, peas, carrots and others, Acha, sweet potatoes, corn, sorghum, yam, fruits (Banana, Mango, Orange, guava, garden-egg Avocado among others) (Napbut, 2016). According to Mrs. Juliana David

“Jos women are very industrious and hard working. They are almost in every sector; construction works (they fetch water, carry blocks), in trade such as buying and selling of grains and vegetables, running business centres and business cafes. “(Oral interview).

Social Development: Women in Jos play a crucial role in promoting education, healthcare, and social welfare programs (Olabisi, 2017).

Cultural Development: Women in Jos preserve and promote the cultural heritage of their communities through traditional practices and arts (Okpewho, 2017).

Environmental Development: Women in Jos contribute to environmental conservation and sustainability efforts, protecting natural resources for future generations (Eze et al., 2018).

Educational Development

Jos metropolis is within the state capital, Jos. It boasts of many educational institutions ranging from primary to tertiary. Most of the private schools (primary and secondary) in the metropolis are run by women and three quarters of the leaders are women. The notable schools run by women in the metropolis include: St. Louis secondary school (run by catholic Reverend Sister, and the school is purely a girl's school). St Therese secondary school (another catholic school run by Reverend sisters and is also a girls' school), Alama private school (Mrs. Rose Adamu), jos, Bethel international school, Rayfield (Mrs. Goddy Miri), stepping stone international school, Abatoir (Mrs. Nandir Ladong), victory science school, Zaria Road (Mrs. Kate Nwachukwu), Firm Foundation Nursery and Primary School, Mista-Ali (Mrs. Choms). Atinga Memorial School, Miango (Mrs. Alheri Afinga), just to mention but a few.

Women in Bassa Local Government Area have made appreciable progress in the imparting of formal education to the people of the area. This is manifested in the fact that, there are six nursery schools, sixty-five primary schools, six vocational schools and thirteen secondary schools run by women in the nine districts of the Local Government Area (Plateau State Government. 1991-14)"

In Jas (Jos North, Jos South and Jos East), there are more than one hundred and ten (110) schools with a population of over one hundred thousand (100,000) run by women. These schools ranged from nursery, primary and secondary schools (Local government development in Plateau State, 1991.25). Between 1992 to date the number of schools could have doubled, but the research or has no record of them. In the pursuit of education in the

metropolis, more women have enrolled into adult literacy classes because of the demands of responsibilities expected of them (Plateau State Government, 1996:21)

Agricultural Development

Women all over the world are known to have been widely involved in various agricultural productions particularly in the areas of food crop farming: food processing and marketing (Abama and Mangwat, 2002:55). Plateau women have fared very well in the agricultural sector. The pre-occupation of women in Bassa Local Government council is farming. The major farm produce of the women here include Maize, Acha, Beans, Millet and Yams... the women in Jos North, Jos South and Jos East are good farmers, cultivating both food and cash crops such as Irish Potatoes, Maize, Millet, Guinea Corn, Sweet Potatoes, Cocoyam, Beans. Acha, Yam, Groundnuts, Wheat and Coffee (Plateau State Government, 1996:14).

The statement by the former minister for agriculture and natural resources confirmed the participation of Plateau women in Agriculture its statement reads:

The minister of agriculture and natural resources, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, has donated N10 million to Plateau Fadama III farmers to aid them in establishing Fadama micro-finance bank. The bank is a brain child of the Fadama III farmers who contributed five percent of their savings to set it up, to enable them to get a one digit interest loan to finance their farming business. The minister lauded the initiative by the farmers comprising seventy five percent (75%) women... if you look at the repayment rate of loans, ninety eight (98%) of women, pay back the loan facilities they get and Therefore women are actually the people you should be banking in because they pay back... he minister said that there was no reason thirty percent (30%) of loans should not go to women because more of them were into farming. According to him, investing in women secures the life of a household and the destiny of a country and therefore, more support should be given to boost their farming activities (NAN, www.vanguardngr.com. February, 11, 2014).

The success story of women participation in agriculture under the Fadama III project speaks a lot about the contributions of women in agriculture especially in Jos metropolis. The contributions include the following:

Another Life women in Agriculture (ALWA); This group of women in agriculture is from Bassa local government council which is part of Jos Metropolis. The group is made up of twenty (20), Women with Mrs. Patricia Azi as the leader. The group is into poultry, piggery, goats, fishery and rabbit farming... buying and selling of agricultural products, hairdressing, and dress making among others. Another life woman in agriculture (ALWA) built a feed mill plant. This plant is to produce twenty (20) tones of feed per day, for a wide range of livestock including poultry, piggery, fish and dog. The mill will not only enrich the women financially but will also help other poultry or livestock farmers in accessing feeds at their doorstep. It will also generate employment opportunities in the community. The feed mill plant and the poultry has so far employed three permanent staff, four part time staff and four contract staff. (<http://businessdaynigeria.com/feedmill-launched-plateau> 6/05/13/)

Haske women in Agriculture. This group is from Jos North Local Government council in los Metropolis. This group centered in agro processing. The activities of the group was too good to he neglected The Fadama III coordinating office in the state boost the operation of the group by giving it a financial support of three million five hundred thousand (N3.5million). The leader of the group Mrs. Mariam Ngwe said that the group will improve agricultural production as it is what put food on their tables, settle medical bills, pay children school fees and improve standard of living (August 24, 2013, tungamediang.com).

Women in Agriculture and Youth Empowerment (WAYE)

This foundation was established by the Ngo Talatu Jang, the wife of the former Governor of Plateau State, Jonah David Jang. This based in Jos South the objectives include;

- a. Setting up a skill acquisition center for women
- b. Building the capacity of peasant women and youth on farming and preservation. The foundation has given soft loans to women for agricultural purpose especially farming provided fertilizer for women during farming season (Celdng.org).

Various programs initiated by the government and first ladies have continued to emphasis the need for the women to acquire functional and formal education as a tool for achieving a better life for themselves and their families... seminars on a variety of issues to encourage rural women to improve their knowledge and skills have also been organized. On the whole, there has been a general increase in the enrolment of female adult members who attend literacy classes at the Local government Areas (Plateau State Government 1987:10)

Political Development

Women in Jos are increasingly involved in politics and decision-making positions, advocating for gender equality and social justice (Tripp, 2015).

Women in Jos are very active in politics. Women such as Late Ngo Hanatu Challom, Dame Pauline Tallen (one true Deputy governor of Plateau state, Mrs. Dinah Lar, Rt. Hon. Joyce Ramnap (one time Deputy speaker of the state House of Assembly), Ngo Josephine Piyo (The current deputy councilor in Jos North and Honourable Beni Budmak Lar (a former member of the House of Representatives). (Rose Boyi, oral interview) Honourable Beni Lar performances as imember in the House of representative brought numerous benefits to the state among which are;

Education: In educational, she achieved the following schemes:

She introduced a full partial scholarship scheme for secondary and tertiary students, In collaboration with UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) and Local Government in recommending solutions to government on how to improve educational infrastructure and standards in Langtang North and South, One block of 3 classrooms in Reak, One block of 3 classrooms in Kwanpe, One block of 3 classrooms in Kangtang, One block of

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3 classrooms in Kwallak, One block of 3 classrooms in Zamko, One block of 3 classrooms in Mengwang Langtang South, Modern library with books in Mabudi Langtang South, One block of 2 classrooms in Tongtong Lashel ward, One block of 2 classrooms in Jemkur ward, 3 classrooms block at Karkashi with 4 VIP toilets, 3 classrooms block at Magwang with 4 VIP toilets, 3 classrooms at Keller primary school, One block of 2 classrooms and office in Panzam Zamko ward, One block of 3 classrooms with books and furniture Gbaldum, Dadin kowa, One block of 3 classrooms with VIP toilets and books at Fajul, One block of 3 classrooms with books and furniture Faya, One block of 3 classrooms with books and furniture I Laduwal Dadin kowa, One block of 3 classrooms Karkashi, Nassarawa ward with books and furniture, One block of 3 classrooms Limun Reak ward, One block of 2 classrooms Tunkun Kwampe ward, Support primary school Lyangit with roofing materials Pishe/Yashi ward, One block of three classrooms with books and furniture, hand lamp borehole Keller, Keller ward, One block of 3 classrooms Government College Langtang, Hostel at Government Senior Secondary School Langtang, One block of 2 classrooms Zam Airport Pishe Yashi, One block of 3 classrooms Gazum, One block of 3 classrooms Shiber, One block of 3 classrooms Chuwam, One block of 3 classrooms Wallang, One block of 3 classrooms Tafka, One block of 3 classrooms Shihiri, and She has equipped many schools in the constituency including, Funniyallang, Reak among others (Napbut 2023).

Environment, Sports and Health: Beni Lar did the following as it affects the environment, sport and health. Afforestation to combat desertification at Jat ward Langtang North, Erosion control projects in shihiri, Nassarawa, and Langtang South, She raised a female football team known as “Beni rockets” or Langtang Tigress. They were winners of the female ALGON championship, 2007, Hon. Beni Lar has provided the following primary health care centre in Langtang North and South with equipment worth millions of naira and these are, Tafka primary health centre, Langtang North, Keller primary health centre, Langtang North, Magama primary health centre, Langtang South, Turaki primary health centre, Langtang South, Support to Gbak Community Health Care Project, Supply of medical equipment in PHC, kalpak, Keller ward, Supply of medical equipment in PHC, Yakot, Keller ward, Supply of hospital equipment Turaki and other clinics in Langtang South, Renovation of PHC Pishe/yashi and Renovation of PHC Fajul (captured in 2021 budget) and She has sponsored, supported, and contributed to many medical outreaches in the constituency (Napbut 2023).

Power

Hon. Beni Lar has provided over two thousand solar street lights across the Langtang North and South Federal Constituency, some of them are: Solar Street lights, Gangtang, Warok land, Solar Street lights Turaki, Solar Street lights Kowa, Solar Street lights Mabudi, Solar Street lights Kwaikong and Solar Street lights Lohmak/Sabonlayi Jat ward. Almost all communities in Langtang North and South Federal Constituency have solar street light but space won't allow us name them and more are still coming. **Provision of Transformers:** she provided transformers in the following places; sabonlayi, shapir-keller, pil-gani, kangtang, nassarawa, mabudi, sabongida, longbap,

lazhan, kapshe, tabatkogi and 'road block'. Electrification: the following villages were fully electrified by hon. beni lar; tabat kogi, nassarawa, lazhan, longbap, kangtang, zamko- talbut, shaper, pangna -tafka- gwandamung, kumkwam and 'road block' (Napbut 2023).

Roads: She constructed road in the following places; Construction of Kwallak rural access road and box culvert; Construction of Gasham Pil-Gani road with surface dressing 16km; Construction of Pangna rural access road and box culvert; Construction of Kwallak – Tafka/Gwandamung and Kongkong road; Construction of Konkong Bridge (ongoing); Construction of Mabudi to Lokang road; Construction of Talbut to Shiber Road; Construction of Kwanpe to Tunkun Road (ongoing); Construction of Kangkur to Limun Road (ongoing); Construction of Nwur road (ongoing); Construction of Gabong-Mabe road with box culverts (ongoing) and Construction of Timman to Timbol road (Napbut 2023)..

Conclusion:

In conclusion, women have made significant contributions to the development of Jos, Nigeria, despite facing various challenges. Their roles in economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental development have been instrumental in shaping the city's growth and progress (Adeyinka et al., 2017; Olabisi, 2017; Okpewho, 2017; Tripp, 2015; Eze et al., 2018). It is essential to recognize and support women's empowerment and participation in development efforts to foster sustainable growth and development in Jos (Kabeer, 1999; Berkowitz, 2017).

Recommendations

1. Empowerment Programs: Establish programs to empower women economically, politically, and socially, addressing challenges like poverty, limited education, and genderbased violence.
2. Education and Skills Training: Provide access to quality education and skills training, enabling women to participate in the workforce and contribute to economic growth.
3. Healthcare and Social Services: Improve access to healthcare and social services, addressing maternal mortality, child health, and social welfare needs.
4. Political Representation: Increase women's representation in politics and decision-making positions, ensuring their voices are heard and interests represented.
5. Cultural Preservation: Support initiatives preserving and promoting women's cultural heritage, traditional practices, and arts.
6. Environmental Conservation: Engage women in environmental conservation efforts, protecting natural resources and promoting sustainability.
7. Networking and Collaboration: Foster networking and collaboration among women's organizations, promoting collective action and social change.
8. Policy Reforms: Advocate for policy reforms addressing gender inequality, discrimination, and social injustice.

9. Capacity Building: Provide capacity-building programs for women, enhancing their leadership, management, and entrepreneurship skills.
 10. Research and Documentation: Conduct research and document women's contributions to Jos' development, informing policy and programming.
- By implementing these recommendations, we can support and amplify women's contributions to the development of Jos, promoting a more equitable and prosperous society.

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