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Gender Inequalities and their Implications for Living Standard and Food Security among Male and Female Headed Households in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Both male and female participate in farming activities in Nigeria. The activities of women apart from cultivation, includes processing, marketing and livestock husbandry. Despite improvements in building women's capabilities, gender gaps in entitlements - the resources which women and men can command through available legal means - continue to persist. This is reflected in unequal rights between men and women for both natural and physical capital which leads to inadequate and inappropriate use of resources; and limited alternatives, low income, poor diets, low living standard. These disparities have serious consequences for well being, not only for women themselves, but also for their families and for society.

This study compares the resources available to male and female headed households, the use and productivity of these. In comparing them, the different roles and decision-making of men and women are described and defined. Also a comprehensive inside view of differences in environment (economic, administrative, social) and decision-making is given. The impact of these on living standard and food security are also examined.

The results show significant differences in resource availability especially land. Female heads of households are found to be more efficient with capital and labour use while male heads are more efficient with land use. The factors influencing gender roles and decision making differ between the two groups. While the male headed households have higher incomes and a relatively better living standard, their health situation is worse compared with female headed households. Perceptions of the food security situation indicate cultural preferences and taste for food; poor and unvaried diet. In both cases caloric availability is low and influenced by different factors.

Keywords: Decision making, food security, gender roles, male/female headed household