

COVID-19 Pandemic And Its Impacts As Experienced By Women in Nigeria



Photo credit: Sefa Nkansa, 2018

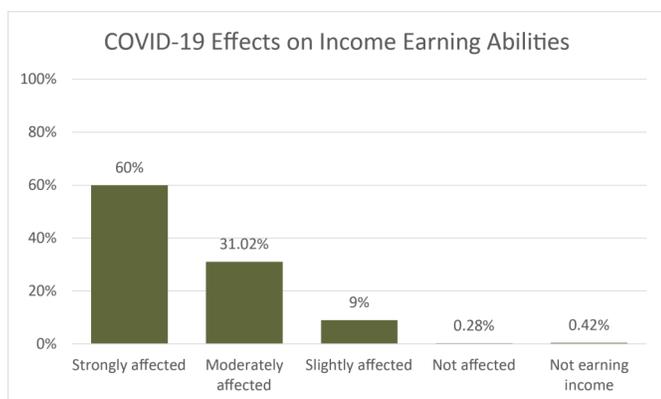
Women for Women International (WfWI) works with the most marginalized women from conflict affected countries to support them in economic and social empowerment. We believe that a woman can create sustainable change for herself, her family and community through her skills, knowledge and resources. Since 1993, WfWI has worked with over half a million persons from eight countries. Women for Women International-Nigeria (WfWI-Nigeria) works with survivors of internal displacement caused by communal attacks and violent insurgency and engages them in skills, knowledge and network building training programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the way we live, work, and interact, and the impact threatens the achievements made thus far. With constraints to spend on essential goods and services and anticipated decline in income and assets, this impact is pronounced for marginalized and rural dwellers. Hence, to understand the impact of the pandemic on the lives of the women and inform response to similar future outbreaks, WfWI-Nigeria surveyed its past and present participants. This learning brief provides a summary of the COVID-19 outbreak impact experienced by 722 women in different communities in Plateau, Bauchi and Kaduna States.

In May 2020, WfWI surveyed over 700 participants to learn about the effects of the pandemic on the women's lives, and their economic and social situations.

Key Outcomes:

- Women report increased participation in family decision making.
- Women are facing significant decreases in income and challenges in their businesses.
- Many women sometimes do not have enough food to eat in the household.
- Many women report difficulty maintaining their social network.
- Top 3 challenges faced by the women include food shortages, lack of access to healthcare and basic infrastructure such as water and electricity, and loss of income.

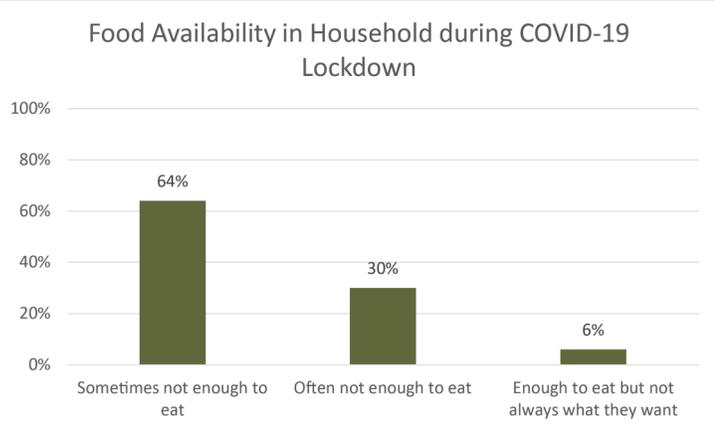


Key Insights

Many women experienced strong to moderate effects in multiple aspects of their lives including their income earning abilities. Majority of them reported decrease in weekly income and nearly a quarter had zero income during the pandemic. Most women shared that their businesses were affected by multiple challenges such as lesser business transactions, increase in credit sales, and loss of capital leading to temporary shutdown, and few respondents reported temporary business closure due to the pandemic/lockdown.

The women constantly worry that they might not be able to sustain their businesses with continued losses. 22% reported they were out of business already and 35% fear business closure in 1-6 months if the lockdown continues.

The women reported that the pandemic/lockdown had also affected their access to food. **Most respondents reported either sometimes or often not having enough to eat in the household.** Further, most of the respondents (81%) report that their household members eat less than three meals a day during the lockdown.



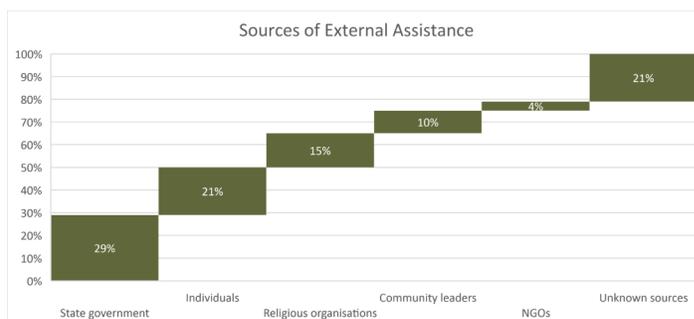
The pandemic has had mostly positive effects on the familial lives of the women. Majority of the respondents reported having had positive relationships with their family members. They discussed issues on financial resource planning and completed chores together. **They report increased feelings of unity, understanding, support, and tolerance, and improved communication from spouses.** In contrary, some respondents report frequent arguments with spouses about resources to provide for the family. Adhering to safety and health measures to contain the virus has increased difficulties in their communal living. The women shared limited abilities to maintain their social network, and help and encourage neighbors and friends during the lockdown.



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The women reported facing increased challenges due to the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown measures to contain it. **Amongst the many challenges that they faced, food shortage, lack of income or income-generating activity, lack of access to healthcare and education, lack of basic infrastructures such as portable water, electricity and road, and lack of access to farm inputs were highlighted.** Despite these difficulties, almost half the respondents report learning about resource management, need for business diversification, significance of health precautions and the value of maintaining and relying on their social network.

External assistance during the challenging times was scarce and very few respondents report receiving assistance from outside the community during the difficult lockdown. The assistance came in forms of food donations, cash donations, and hygiene kits and the top three known providers were the State Government, individuals, and religious organizations.



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