

# Women and household sustenance: changing livelihoods and survival strategies in the peri-urban areas of Ibadan

*Oluremi Jaiyebo*

Oluremi Jaiyebo is an agricultural economist, and a junior research fellow in the Farming Systems Research and Extension Programme at the Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, Moor Plantation, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Address: PO Box 16478, Dugbe GPO, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria; e-mail: remijay@hotmail.com

**SUMMARY:** This paper describes the livelihoods and survival strategies of low-income households in two peri-urban locations in Ibadan, drawing primarily on interviews with 96 women who sell goods from makeshift stalls or who live in poor-quality houses. This includes reports of these women's perceptions of poverty, their incomes (44 per cent earned less than US\$ 1 per day) and the strategies they used to avoid poverty (for all, working longer hours; for most, having their children engage in income-earning activities although, for most, this was after school or during holidays; and, for some, working in more than one business). Many had at one time farmed (mostly using "idle" land), but few now did so as the availability of land for farming had diminished.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE ROLES THAT men and women play in the home and society vary from one country to another but, generally, women face drawbacks relative to men in the social, economic and political spheres of life. Women make up an increasing share of the labour force in almost all regions of the world; for instance, in 1999, they formed 43 per cent of the labour force in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>(1)</sup> Women have also been found to represent a disproportionate share of the poor, taking up occupations such as market work and street vending, where wages are very low. This helps to explain why poverty is so common among women. In addition, in sub-Saharan Africa, poverty among women continues to rise.<sup>(2)</sup> Moreover, the amount of time and energy expended by women in sustaining their households is not adequately computed and documented in official data, and is most often simply dismissed as "normal" domestic work.<sup>(3)</sup>

Poverty has many causes and manifestations, making it difficult to describe with a single indicator.<sup>(4)</sup> Poor people usually have incomes inadequate to support a minimum standard of living, although the income needed to avoid poverty varies from region to region and country to country. It has also been noted that poverty is the effect of dynamic processes, and people tend to move in and out of poverty depending on how vulnerable they are to external shocks and stresses and on how quickly they can recover from such events.<sup>(5)</sup>

Much attention has been given to rural poverty. In regard to urban poverty, however, there is a lack of information on poverty in peri-urban areas. For a complete picture of poverty in any country or region, rural,

1. Ashford, S Lori (2001), "New population policies: advancing women's health and rights", *Population Bulletin* Vol 56, No 1, March, Population Reference Bureau, Washington DC, 44 pages.

2. Maxwell, Simon (1998), "Agricultural development and poverty in Africa", CTA Annual Report 1998, Special Paper, 12 pages.

3. Ekejiuba, Felicia (1991), "Women in the context of Nigerian rural development" in Ojere, Martin O (editor), *Women in the Nigerian Economy*, Acena Publishers, Enugu, Nigeria, pages 81–105; also Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), The Netherlands; Austrian Development Cooperation, Austria; Hellenic Ministry of Agriculture, Greece (2000), "The economic role of women in agricultural

urban and peri-urban poverty should all be documented to inform poverty reduction and alleviation policies.

It has been noted that the physical distinction between urban and rural areas cannot be assumed to be self-explanatory and uncontroversial.<sup>(6)</sup> In the same vein, the definition of peri-urban areas should not be assumed to be self-explanatory and so cannot be generalized, as the criteria used are likely to vary between regions. However, there is a common view on the formation of peri-urban areas being a result of the outward movement of people from the main city and in-migration to the city periphery from other metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.<sup>(7)</sup>

There is a dearth of information on the peri-urban interface in Nigeria, and the rates of city expansion and migration to city fringes are not adequately documented. Women are regarded as the home-builders and play a pivotal role in the home and society. There is evidence of rising poverty, and this affects women in particular. This paper describes poor women's perceptions of their livelihoods under the combined impacts of urban growth and increases in the cost of living. The main constraints, survival strategies and suggestions for effective poverty reduction and alleviation initiatives are also considered.

## II. THE STUDY AREA

NIGERIA COVERS AN area of about 923,769 square kilometres<sup>(8)</sup> and is the most populous African country south of the Sahara. The most recent census, taken in 1991, put the population at 88 million and, with a growth rate of 2.83 per cent per annum,<sup>(9)</sup> the population was estimated to be 117 million persons in 2001.

Based on projections from the 1991 official census, in 1999, the population's literacy level was estimated to be 57 per cent; household access to electricity, 34 per cent; population with access to safe water, 40 per cent; and gainfully employed labour force (in both the formal and informal sectors), 50 per cent.<sup>(10)</sup>

Ibadan, located in the humid southwest of Nigeria, is the capital city of Oyo State, and its 2,359,526 inhabitants in the year 2000 represented 53.2 per cent of the state's total population. Ibadan is composed of the main city and its suburbs; administratively, Ibadan municipality consists of five local government areas, and there are six local government areas in the suburbs (Figure 1). Sixty seven per cent of Ibadan's population is concentrated within the municipality, and 33 per cent in the suburbs.

For this study, two locations were selected to the north and south of the main city, approximately 13 kilometres and 15 kilometres from the city centre, respectively. Opopolaye (in the north) has, to a very large extent, been absorbed into the urban fabric of the city, whilst Odo-ona nla (Idi Ayunre) is a peri-urban village south of the main city. Development is not taking place at the same rate on all sides of the city, and expansion to the north seems to have been more rapid than to the south; this can be attributed to the major transportation road which links the north and the south of the country, and which passes through the northern part of Ibadan.

From both locations, 96 women in total were randomly selected, including women with makeshift stalls and/or who lived in unpainted houses with wooden windows without mosquito nets. Personal interviews were held with these women, in addition to the use of structured questionnaires.

and rural development: promoting income-generating activities", Summary Report of a seminar held in Athens, Greece 18–22 October 1999, 56 pages.

4. Brook, R M and J D Davila (editors) (2000), "The peri-urban interface: a tale of two cities", School of Agricultural and Forest Sciences, University of Wales and Development Planning Unit, University College, London, 251 pages; also Haralambous, Sappho (editor) (1993), "The state of world rural poverty: a profile of Latin America and the Caribbean", International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rome, Italy, 92 pages; and Webster, Andrew (1990), *Introduction to the Sociology of Development*, Macmillan Education Ltd, 224 pages.

5. See reference 4, Haralambous (1993); also Tacoli, Cecilia (1999), "Understanding the opportunities and constraints for low-income groups in the peri-urban interface: the contribution of livelihood frameworks", [<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/pui/>], (accessed 28 September 2001).

6. Tacoli, Cecilia (1998), "Bridging the divide: rural-urban interactions and livelihood strategies", *Gatekeeper Series No 77*, IIED, London, 20 pages.

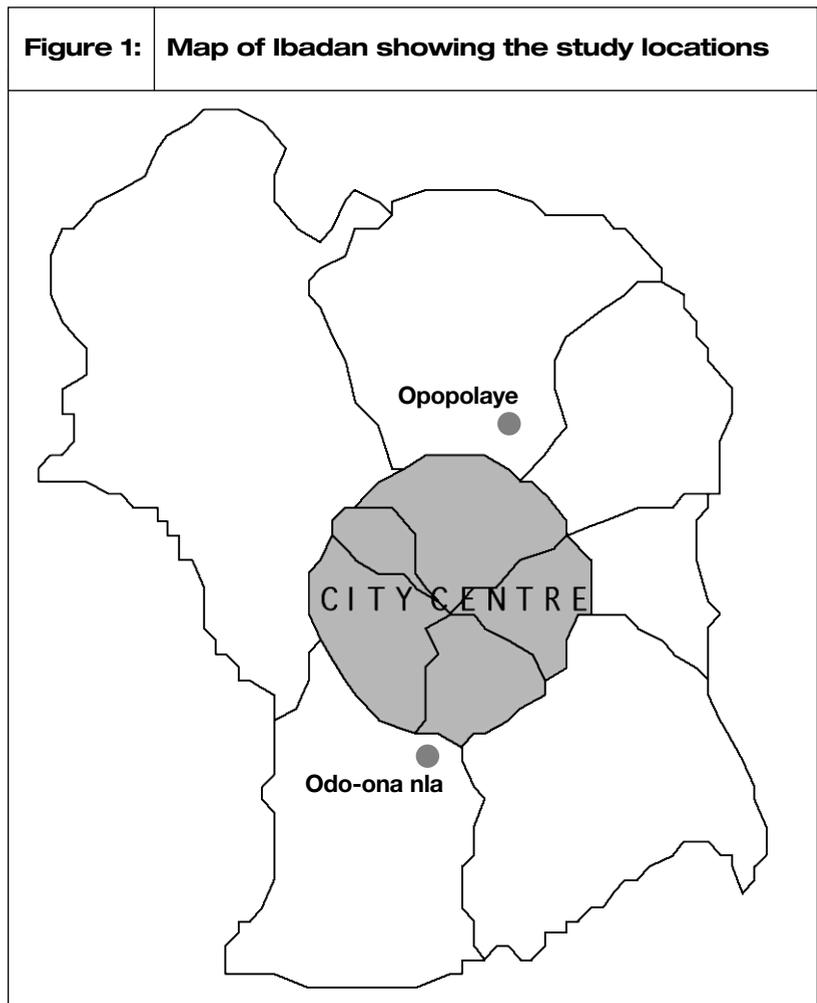
7. Birley, M H and K Lock (1999), "The health impacts of peri-urban natural resource development", Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, 185 pages; also see reference 4, Brook and Davila (2000); and Brown, L David (1979), "Agricultural land use: a population distribution perspective" in Schnepf, Max (editor), *Farmland, Food and the Future*, The Soil Conservation Society of America, Ankeny, Iowa, pages 77–88.

8. FOS (Federal Office of

Statistics) (1997), "Annual abstract of statistics", Federal Office of Statistics, Abuja, Nigeria, 477 pages.

9. See reference 8.

10. Kolade, Christopher (2000), "Management of government: a critical success factor in Nigeria's economic turnaround", *Management in Nigeria* Vol 36, Nos 3 and 4, July–December, pages 7–17.



#### a. Rationale for sample selection

People with sufficient resources will normally rent shops or offices to carry out their trade or business. Thus, trading from makeshift stalls and hawking can be taken as indicators of insufficient resources. In addition, type of housing is an indicator of the economic status of the inhabitants. For instance, a fenced house with glass windows, aluminium sliding doors, mosquito nets and an electricity generator indicates a relatively high-income inhabitant. On the other hand, an unpainted house with wooden windows and without mosquito nets indicates inhabitants with low economic status.

Seventy-two women were selected from Odo-ona nla, in the south (location A), and 24 from Opopolaye (location B), in the north (Table 1). The small sample size for location B was due to the unwillingness of many women to be interviewed for the study. All the women selected for the study were within the active productive age group, that is, between 18 and 60 years old.

Eighty-eight per cent of all respondents had lived in the peri-urban area for four years or more, for various reasons. Thirty-three per cent were resident based on marriage, either because it was their husband's choice after

## WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS

<b>Table 1: Personal information on respondents</b>						
Location	Odo-ona nla Location A		Opopolaye Location B		Both (A+B)	
Total respondents	72		24		96	
Features	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Age</i>						
21–30	33	46	6	25	39	41
31–40	21	29	12	50	33	34
41–50	12	17	5	21	17	18
51–60	6	8	1	4	7	7
<i>Educational qualification</i>						
None	15	21	0	0	15	16
Primary	9	13	10	42	19	20
Secondary	42	58	14	58	56	58
Tertiary	6	8	0	0	6	6

SOURCE: Author's survey, 2001.

marriage or because he had previously been resident there and they had joined him after marriage. About 17 per cent were resident based on accommodation needs – they had moved from the main city with their husbands to build their homes on cheap, affordable peri-urban land. Another 17 per cent had moved with their families from the main city, where the cost of living was considered high, to the peri-urban area, where costs are relatively low and conducive for trading/business. Only 3 per cent of respondents were resident in location A mainly for the purposes of farming – this category of women indicated that they had moved in with their husbands to farm for a living (Table 2).

<b>Table 2: Distribution of respondents by reason of residency in peri-urban area</b>						
Location	Odo-ona nla Location A		Opopolaye Location B		Both (A+B)	
Features	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Reasons for residency</i>						
Marriage	30	42	2	8	32	33
Accommodation	6	8	10	42	16	17
Spouse employment	11	15	12	50	23	24
Trade/business	16	22	0	0	16	17
Farming	3	4	0	0	3	3
Other	6	8	0	0	6	6

<b>Table 3: Respondents' perception of their poverty status</b>		
Perceived status	Number of respondents	Percentage
Poor	10	10
Mid-way (neither poor nor rich)	59	62
Rich	27	28
<i>Total</i>	96	100

SOURCE: Author's survey 2001.

### III. PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY AND THE POOR

IN NIGERIA, POVERTY has manifested in various forms, including low purchasing power, high rates of unemployment, high incidence of crime, poor infrastructure, and an inability to afford food, shelter, clothing, transportation and children's education.<sup>(11)</sup>

Poverty may mean different things to different people within and across regions, depending on the terms used in the definition. The common perception in Nigeria is that poverty is manifested in the inability to feed oneself and the household, thus resulting in begging for alms/aid or borrowing in order to provide food.

The perception of the women in the two locations concerning poverty was similar. According to 27 of the women (Table 3), a person is regarded as "rich" if he/she can afford the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and children's education – these they could afford and thus classified themselves as "rich". This category of respondent visualizes a poor person as a pauper in rags who cannot afford any of the basic needs of life. On the other hand, ten of the women regarded themselves as "poor", due to insufficient cash to obtain good quality food, clothing and housing. For anyone to be classified as "rich", it was noted that he/she must have surplus cash after meeting the basic needs of the household. The majority (59) classified themselves as neither "poor" nor "rich", but mid-way – people in this category may not be able to afford fancy clothing and housing but can feed their household and give their children a basic education.

One major observation is that there seems to be a close link between educational background and perception of poverty by the respondents. All those who classified themselves as "poor" had a secondary education, and had an understanding of poverty which went beyond the ability to feed and clothe. This category of women emphasized good quality food, clothing, shelter and infrastructure as indicators of being "rich". Thirty-seven per cent of the "rich" had no formal education. It seems therefore that education contributes to understanding of poverty issues.

The poor are those who fall below certain standards, which vary among the respondents. Whilst some are particular about the quality of assets, others are more concerned with having access to the basic assets of life and are less concerned about quality. The women in this latter category seem to have some resentment towards the government for the long neglect of peri-urban areas.

11. Oyeleye, Teju (2000), "Effective managerial approaches: the agricultural sector experience", *Management in Nigeria* Vol 36, Nos 3 and 4, July–December, pages 29–34.

#### IV. STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL

IN ORDER TO “make ends meet”, that is, to sustain their households, women employ various strategies, including income diversification through participation in more than one income-generating activity, and the involvement of children in income generation (Table 4).

Location	Odo-ona nla Location A		Opopolaye Location B		Both (A+B)	
Total respondents	72		24		96	
Occupation	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Major occupation</i>						
Trader/business	63	88	24	100	87	91
Farming	3	4	0	0	3	3
Civil servant	6	8	0	0	6	6
<i>Supplementary occupation</i>						
None	54	75	18	75	72	75
Trader	18	25	6	25	24	25

SOURCE: Author's survey 2001.

All the respondents who had supplementary occupations (Table 4) noted that this was a strategy which enabled them to obtain additional income to meet essential household needs. It was the general view of all respondents that they would rather have only one income-generating activity, provided it gave them enough cash to meet all household needs.

Decades ago, women were involved mainly in one major occupation, usually with flexible working hours and which gave them enough time for child care. However, this situation changed along with the state of the nation's economy, and women now have to do much more in order to provide for their families. When choosing supplementary occupations, the factors they considered were, first, the demand for products/services in order to estimate profitability; second, the amount of seed capital necessary in relation to available cash; and third, the urgency of the need to “invest”. No effort was made by respondents to undertake any quantitative analysis of their investments; concerns about survival take precedence over all other things.

It is worth noting that all supplementary occupations involved some kind of trading activity. The women felt that trading was a convenient way of ensuring they always had some cash in hand, no matter how little, and they were involved in activities such as the sale of snacks (e.g. biscuits, sweets and soft drinks), the sale of fried bean balls prepared by the women themselves, the sale of foodstuffs in small quantities, and the sale of firewood.

It is interesting to note that only 10 per cent of the women regarded themselves as “poor”, yet 25 per cent had supplementary occupations to “make ends meet” and 44 per cent earned less than US\$1 per day (Table 5).

<b>Table 5: Average daily income of respondents with single and multiple income-generating activities</b>		
<i>Single income-generating activity group (total 69 correspondents)</i>		
Average US\$ per day	Number of respondents	Percentage of total (x)
0.38	18	26
0.63	15	22
1.26	9	13
1.52	18	26
1.89	3	4
2.05	6	9
<i>Multiple income-generating activity group (total 27 correspondents)</i>		
Average US\$ per day	Number of respondents	Percentage of total (y)
0.87	9	33
1.26	7	26
1.36	6	22
1.89	3	11
2.52	2	8

Note: Exchange rate used as at the time of this study was US\$ 1 to 110 Nigerian naira.  
SOURCE: Author's survey 2001.

Another notable strategy employed by 84 of the respondents (about 88 per cent) is the involvement of their children in economic activities to help generate additional income for the household. These children mainly hawk goods such as leafy vegetables, fruit, fried bean balls or packaged drinking water. To encourage the children, the money earned is spent on their immediate needs. For instance, children are encouraged to work after school and during holidays, and money earned is used to purchase shoes, school bags, school uniforms and other items they need. The children are thus enthusiastic, knowing that a large proportion or even all of the income they earn will be used for their own needs. The pressure of the need to work for extra money is sometimes so high that some children drop out of school – this was the case with the children of 6 per cent of the women surveyed.

Expenditure patterns varied from time to time for individual women. However, all spent a large proportion of their income (at least two-thirds) on food. When business is not so buoyant, some respondents reported spending as much as 90 per cent, and sometimes even 100 per cent, of their income on food. Stallholders incurred only the initial cost of constructing the stall, and paid no rent for the space. Housing costs are not a major expenditure item, since the majority (78) of the women lived in family houses or in houses owned jointly by them and their husbands. Five women shared rent payments with their husbands, and 13 of them had husbands who were responsible for paying rent.

## V. ACCESS TO LAND

CHANGE AFFECTS PEOPLE in different ways, depending on their ability to adjust based on access to livelihood assets.<sup>12)</sup>

Land is a major natural resource mentioned by the women surveyed as being essential for well-being. They feel that no one can live without land because everything is directly or indirectly derived from it: access to land will give access to cheap food and housing.

Rapid population growth in the main city has resulted in increased demand for land and higher housing costs which, in turn, have resulted in the outward movement of people from the main city to the city fringes, looking for cheaper accommodation and residential land. Table 2 shows that 8 per cent of respondents from location A and 42 per cent of respondents from location B were resident in the peri-urban areas primarily for accommodation reasons. Land in these areas is now increasingly being monetized. An elderly indigenous landowner in location A expressed it thus:

*"...many years ago, land was given out free to visitors who came to settle in our village; they only had to bring a bottle of wine for the elders' blessings. As time went on, these visitors started selling out portions of land they had received from us; when we saw this, we then stopped giving out land free but for a price. Prices have gradually increased over the years and are determined by the economic situation in the country as well as the financial need of the landowner."*

Land use is changing rapidly from agricultural to residential and industrial uses. For some of the women surveyed, there has been increased access to land, whilst for others there has been a decrease. Access to land for farming purposes, at one time or other, formed an integral part of the livelihoods of 46 of the women. Only three owned farmland alongside their husbands. Other women cultivated "idle" land (that is, land bought but not yet developed by the owner) to produce food crops for home consumption and to gain extra income from the sale of surplus crops. The sale of crops from "idle" land was not regarded by the women as a supplementary occupation, as such sales usually take place during times of emergency/urgent cash needs. The usual practice is to give surplus crops to friends and relatives. The major risk in cultivating "idle" land is that the farmer usually has to forgo all crops on the land whenever the owner is ready to start development. Under this system, 43.8 per cent of the respondents had forgone land cultivated for home-consumed food crops to development by landowners and other developmental activities such as quarrying. In the case of two respondents, all the crops meant for home consumption and for extra income through the sale of any surplus were forgone – this meant they had to use all of their income, in addition to a supplement from their husbands, to purchase food from the market. In very few cases, the farmer is given some financial compensation by the landowner.

On the other hand, some landowners, usually based in the main city, allow the temporary use of their land by peri-urban residents for farming activities, pending the time they wish to develop the land. In such cases, the farmers know how long they will have access to the land and can therefore plan production in order to make maximum use of the land before handing it back to the owner at the end of the given period.

## VI. CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PERI-URBAN AREAS

OF THE FIVE livelihood assets (natural, human, financial, physical and

12. See reference 5, Tacoli (1999).

social), the women emphasized only two (natural and financial assets) as being very important, and which act as a springboard for access to the other three. It was indicated that access to finance would create access to social assets, physical assets (e.g. housing and transport), human assets (e.g. good health, skills and education) and even natural assets (land and water).

Water is an essential natural resource necessary for well-being. None of the women in the study had access to pipe-borne water, only to manually operated wells located at a distance of 3–74 metres from their homes. According to the women, time and energy are both saved when there is good access to safe water – less time is spent searching for and fetching water, and there is a reduction in the incidence of infections due to contaminated water. Box 1 gives a summary of the constraints experienced by the women and the available opportunities in the two locations as reported by the women.

<b>Box 1: Constraints and opportunities in peri-urban areas, as reported by respondents</b>	
<b>Constraints</b>	
<i>Location A</i> Lack of easily accessible water supply Poor-quality road links with other villages, resulting in difficult transportation of goods, especially farm produce Long distance travelled to market (located in the main city)	<i>Location B</i> Lack of easily accessible water supply Lack of credit facilities to support investments
<b>Opportunities</b>	
<i>Location A</i> Availability of land and labour for industry Availability of land for large-scale agricultural development	<i>Location B</i> Availability of labour for employment in both formal and informal sectors

## VII. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

THE WOMEN IN this study are not poor because they want to be poor, neither are they poor because they are idle or lazy. They can be regarded as a set of producers with resources so limited that their productivity and efficiency are undermined. Multiple income generation and the involvement of children in economic activities are largely strategies of poor peri-urban women who do not have access to sufficient cash to guarantee access to the basic needs of life, especially food for the household.

It is the women's expectation that the government should encourage development in every area of society. It is therefore important to understand and appreciate women's values and aspirations as they play a pivotal role in the building of the home and society. In agreement with various institutions,<sup>(13)</sup> government should encourage programmes that promote women's economic rights and actively measure women's status, by developing statistical indicators which reflect gender roles and respon-

13. See reference 3, CTA et al. (2000).

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sibilities. A data bank should be created on all aspects of women's activities, to serve as a reference in policy making, monitoring and impact assessment. Research should be directed towards peri-urban, community-level, socioeconomic and cultural conditions which affect women.