

The Invisibility of Housewives Contributions to Families: Understanding the Role of Women in Household Upkeep in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigates the invisibility of housewives contributions to families as a way of understanding the roles of women in household upkeep in Delta State, Nigeria using a gender analysis approach. The specific objectives of the study were to find out if women contribute to the household in Delta State, the nature of their contributions, whether the contributions of housewives are recognised and appreciated and reasons for lack of recognition and to know the perception of housewives about the invisibility of their contributions to the family. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods such as questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus groups discussions were used in a survey design. The result from the study revealed that women contribute greatly to household upkeep even though their contributions most times are unrecognised and invisible leading to bad feeling on the part of housewives which dampened their spirit of productivity in their homes. The paper concluded men should see women as partners and that the works of housewives been recognised to minimise issue of gender inequality and bring about a fair society where both wives as well as their husbands will be happy; in order to bring about a balance development devoid of injustice and gender inequality.

Keywords: Delta State, household, housewives contributions, Invisibility, Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

Plethora of arguments have been put forward regarding the role as well as the participation of women in economic activities in most societies and these have generated serious controversies regarding their contributions to the household upkeep [1]. To a school of thought, the household was seen as a unit of congruent interests and preferences, among whose members, the benefits of available resources were shared equitably irrespective of gender (2). From the perspective of this school of thought, the household is one indivisible and united entity, hence, the head of the household was seen as representing the interest of all the members. Put in other words, development process was described as neutral, where any member of the household, especially the head, could adequately depict what happens in the general household and represented their interest, hence, there was no need taking issues of the household separately (2). In this way, the husband interest was seen as the same as that of the wife and whatever economic means the household members was working on; belong to the household which was in this sense represented by the head. However, this concept of unitary household and gender neutrality had been challenged by academic, researchers, women activist groups, government policy makers, non-

governmental organizations and international agencies [3]. Today, there is fairly acceptance that development is not gender neutral in development enquiry and policies discuss [2].

The later school of thought especially see house wife works within the household as distinct from that of the husband and that for the full realisation of economic potential of the household, these works must be recognised and evaluated as such[4]. From the perspective of Waring[4] and others who believed in this school of thought, the works as well as other contributions of women to the family must be adequately accounted for, since most time their contributions to family upkeep remained insignificantly accounted for and invisible – no matter how substantial or important they may be[3, 4,5,6]. This group argued that major household productions, when view from the unitary point give credit of the production efforts to the heads of the households and in most African countries which are patriarchal in nature, the men take all the glory and production outcomes are accounted to them – thereby making the contributions of their wives in these instances unrecognised and invisible even though such women or housewives are more engaged in the production process [4,5,6]. Hence, the proponents of this position opined that, the household must be viewed from the lens of gender analysis which Idyorough [7] see as a close examination of a problem or situation in order to identify the gender issues related to it; and the unveiling and making such gender issue easily recognisable. According to the author, the process of examination of the issue ensures that, obstacles to progress and prospects for development are identified, the choice of intervention strategies is made and the programme to be implemented is also identified. Therefore, the examination of the household production should take cognisance of the role of men as well as those played by women to be able to disaggregate the contributions to household by the husband and the wife so as to make the works of women, no matter how insignificant, visible.

Identifying women works that are generally invisible, Waring [4], BSR and ICRW [6] and Tirath [8] pointed out that apart from their production in agricultural activities, the most excluded and invisible works of women are household activities. According to Waring [4], these invisible work of women are excluded from economic measurement and are hardly marketed and hence, do not contribute to gross domestic products – bringing about gross under evaluation to household productivity in national economies. From the view point of BSR and ICRW [8], women role and contributions to households as well as the economies are most time overlooked – women’s health, particularly reproductive health, and the important role that women play in childbearing have profound effects on women’s ability to participate in fully in the economy. Indeed, Mark (9) believed that seventy-five percent of the world total unpaid care is undertaken by women, including caring for the elderly, cooking, cleaning and caring for husbands themselves. Sadly, according to the writer and Waring [4], these jobs are not accounted for as part of economic productivity. From the perspective of Tirath [8], when the house is seen as one unit, it tends to benefit men and keeps women, by and large unequal to men in the labour market as well in the society – leading to constant perpetuation of gender based inequalities; which result in other forms of discriminations and unequal societal norms especially in large part of the male dominated patriarchal society where women contributions; especially at the domestic environment are undervalued, even though very labourious work is done by them in both rural and urban areas, which helped in enhancing productivity of the men in the household too. However, Tirath(8)believed, that valuation of unpaid and invisible labour by women will lead to quantification of women's contribution to the economy; establish her claim on national exchequer and inclusion in national policy; claim in establishing and determining legal compensation in case of divorce; and in empowering women and generally lead to formulation of suitable strategies for empowering women. Lastly, according to Tirath (8) the valuation of such work will provide data for effective planning; act as the legal framework for asset sharing during divorce, which has the potential to go a long way in empowering women and enhancing her dignity in the society and the household and will reinforce the recognition of the impact and contributions of non-market works towards market works, and the macro-economy dimensions of such valuation – hence, all invisible works of women either in the household or others should be effectively recognised since the labour of women in the household enable men to produce more wealth than they could not have not in the absence of the performance of such works.

Shamsu-Deen (1), Waring [4] and Tirath [8] gave reasons why women works are invisible. According them, most societies especially in developing nations are patriarchal and male dominated, hence, women are seen as appendage to men and their works are subsumed under men productivity. This subordination of women to men from their view is also seen in the way women are excluded from the decision making process. According to Waring [4] and BSR and ICRW [8] women works are invisible because, they are household works which are mostly enjoyed within the household and are seldom or not marketed at all which they tagged unpaid services of housewives which are hardly measured in national

economies; sadly, from the view point of Waring [4] these are used for the calculations of gross domestic product which international agencies use for assistance of countries, leading to gross under estimation of such economies, false data for planning and poor rating in the international arena. Another factor identified as militating against the visibility of women works has to do with poor access to land by women [1,4,]. Women though carry out most of the farming activities and food production; these are most time never done in their own farmlands but that of the husbands – thereby letting the men have access to the control of the yields from such endeavours. Tirath [4] opined that the invisibility of the works of women is helped greatly by the nature of women works which are scattered and haphazard, hence measuring such activities become difficult.

The final document of the end of decade conference for the United Nations decade for women held in Nairobi 1985 [10] agreed that all women contributions to the household should be accounted for and measured in the national accounts and economics statistics [4]. Additionally, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Cairo, Egypt, 1994 gave voice to the recognition of women and their works. In spite of this position, most housewives works in Nigeria and indeed Africa are still considered as part those of men and remained largely invisible: Hence, it is the goal of this paper to study this invisibility of housewives works in the families with a view of understanding the role of women to household upkeep in Nigeria by adopting a gender analysis approach to uncover the contributions of partners to household upkeep. The specific questions which this study seeks to answer are: (1) Do women contribute to the household in Delta State? (2) What is the nature of women contributions to household? (3) Are the contributions of housewives recognised and appreciated? (4) What are the reasons, if any, for not recognizing women works and making them invisible? [5] How do housewives perceive the invisibility of their contributions to the family?

II. METHODS

Study Design, Setting and Sampling:

The study adopted survey design using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in data collection. Quantitative techniques involved the use of pre-tested structured questionnaires to understand the socio-demographic attributes of respondents on one hand and information on the participation of house wives in household unpaid activities such as childbearing, caring for children, cooking, cleaning, clothes watching including farming and other agricultural activities on the other hand. Qualitative methods used were in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) used to enhance, as well as clarify, the quantitative results generated in the survey (11). With respect to quantitative approach, a cross-sectional survey was carried out in which 396 women were survey in self administration of questionnaires. The inclusion criteria were: being residents in the study areas for a period of not less than one year and being a housewife and still married and living together as spouses as at the time of interview. The study was carried out in three urban and rural locations each that were purposively selected. Delta State was demarcated into three senatorial zones and a local government purposively selected from each of the senatorial zones. The selected LGAs were: Isoko South LGA (Delta South), Ndokwa West LGA (Delta North) and Udu LGA in Delta Central. The LGAs were selected to reflect some spatial flavour in the discussion of invisibility of housewives contributions to household upkeep in Delta State. A systematic sampling selection was adopted to select the housing units where respondents who took part in the interview were selected. The study began with contact setting and visits to relevant stakeholders and authorities to inform them of the purpose and permission to start the study between January and April, 2016.

Interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDS):

In all, twelve in-depth interviews were held with different stakeholders on contribution of housewives to household with 4 in each senatorial district, generally based on their knowledge of the subject. Regarding FGDs, six of them were held including one each in Oleh, Ovwian and Kwale towns in Isoko South, Udu and Ndokwa West LGAs. At the rural area, three communities were grouped together based on their proximity to one another. In all, twelve persons participated in the in-depth interview include 5 men and 7 women. A total of 42 participants took part in the FGDs both for the three in the towns and the three in the rural communities with seven persons in each of the FGDs. The six FGDs comprised of 4 all female and two mixed FGDs in rural as well as urban localities. The interviews as well as the FGDs were conducted in English and the corrupted version - pidgin.

Data analysis:

Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Products and Service Solutions (SPSS) software IBM version 21. Analysis was done using percentages and cross tabulations. Analysis of qualitative data entailed the use of N6 software after transcription of data and coding and content analysed in term of the themes and objective that the study tried to achieve. In analyzing the transcripts from the focus group discussions, in-depth and key informant interviews, the thematic analysis technique was used to uncover themes and trends. Comments on each aspect of the objectives of the study were compared by place of interview. Excerpts of the transcripts were used to complement the quantitative results where possible. Such excerpts are the views expressed by the majority of the discussants. These were also supported with similar views from the FGDs and in-depth interviews.

Ethical consideration:

The survey protocol were reviewed and approved by the Ethical Review Committee of Centre for Population and Environmental Development. Though the study was classified as a low risk one in term of the objects of investigation, At all levels, participants were briefed on the study objectives and their consent was received verbally before administering any of the research protocols. In addition, all the participants were informed of their right to withdraw their participation in the study at any stage. The participants were also assured of their anonymity during and after the study (12).

III. RESULTS

Table 1 revealed that the largest household sizes of the studied population were 7-8 and 5-6 members with 34.3% and 29.9% respectively. These were followed with 3-4 members' household size with 22.5%. The highest age range of the respondents was in 31-40 year with 37.4%. The age ranges of 21-30, 41-50 and more than 50 years followed in the order of 24.6%, 20.6% and 12.6% respectively. Educationally, the proportion was 37.8%, 36.2%, 14.5% and 11.5% for primary school, secondary school, tertiary level and for those without any form of formal schooling respectively. More than 32% of the respondents lived on N10,000 or less; 25.4% lived on N11,000-N20,000, 24.5% lived on N31,000-N50,000 and 17.2% lived on more than N50,000 per month. More of the sampled population was from Urhobo (35.3%). This was followed by Igbo (30.7%) and Isoko (29.6%). Occupationally, there were more respondents who were traders (27.8%) and farmers (24.7%). However, 21.1% of them were not employed as at the time of the survey. An equal proportion of 50% of them lived in rural as well as urban location.

Table.1: Selected characteristics of the surveyed respondents (n=396)

Variable	N	%
Household Size		
1 -2Persons	25	6.2
3- 4Persons	89	22.5
5-6 Persons	118	29.9
7-8 Persons	136	34.3
9 Person and above	28	7.1
Age		
Less than 20 Years	19	4.8
21-30 Years	97	24.6
31-40 Years	148	37.4
41-50 Years	82	20.6
More than 50 Years	50	12.6
Highest Level of Education		
Non	46	11.5
Primary	150	37.8
Secondary	143	36.2
Tertiary	57	14.5
Monthly Income		
Less than 10,000	130	32.9

11,000-30,000	101	25.4
31,000-50,000	97	24.5
More than 50,000	68	17.2
Ethnicity		
Urhobo	140	35.3
Igbo	122	30.7
Isoko	117	29.6
Others	17	4.4
Occupation		
Farming	98	24.7
Trading	110	27.8
Civil Service	53	13.3
Tailoring	43	10.8
Full time house wife	9	2.3
Not employed	83	21.1
Resident		
Rural	198	50
Urban	198	50

Women works are considered invisible; hence these contributions are not listed as part of economic activities [4]. It is from this perspective that the sample population were asked to indicate if they contribute to household upkeep by responding to the statement “Housewives are big contributors to the upkeep of the family along the contributions of their husbands” Table 2 showed that a preponderant of the respondents (98.3%) believed that housewives are a strong part of the contributions to the household upkeep as only an extremely insignificant proportion of 1.7% held a contrary view on housewives contributions to their homes. To arrive at the quoted proportions, those housewives in the sampled population who strongly agreed (51.5%) with the statement that “Housewives are big contributors to the upkeep of the family along the contributions of their husbands” were merged with those who agreed (46.8%). It is evident in line with the position of Waring [4] and Tirath [8] that women in this study contribute immensely to household upkeeps. The excerpts from the interviews and focus groups support the position that housewives are contributors to the homes as found below:

“Let us be honest with ourselves. Let the men also be humble to admit our contributions to keeping the homes surviving. I dare to say today that without housewives most homes in Delta State and indeed Nigeria will never be stable economically. I have experiences and indeed witnesses that the bread winners in most homes are now the housewives. We hustle daily to bring food to the table in our homes even when most men will not want to appreciate this”

-----An interview in Udu LGA

“We housewife de try no be small. We de hep our husband to make sure say our house no get prolem at all. We de fit buy food, we de go fam, go fish, we de pay school fix sef make our children fit go school. After all God don talk am say we be heper to our husband and we de do our duty”

(We are trying as housewives. We assist our husbands to make sure there are no issues in our homes. We are involved in the buying food, farming, fishing, paying of school fees – so that our children could go to school. After all, God made us helpers to our husbands and we are doing just that)

-----A portion of an FGD in Isoko South

“The issue is that most men do not want to admit their helplessness that they cannot take care of the home alone. They choose to ignore our contributions even when we have taken over their duties to provide for the family. They still posed as the head without acknowledging our numerous contributions which ordinarily should make us compete for the headship of the home, but God gave that to our men. However it important we receive commendations for our uncountable inputs to the welfare of our families”

-----A woman interviewee in Kwale

Table.2: Women perception on their contributions to household upkeep

LGAs	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Disagreed		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Isoko South	66	16.7	63	15.9	2	0.6	0	0.0	131	100
Udu	73	18.4	59	14.8	1	0.3	0	0.0	133	100
Ndokwa West	65	16.4	64	16.1	3	0.8	0	0.0	132	100
Total	204	51.5	186	46.8	6	1.7	0	0.0	396	100

An aspect of the contributions of housewives to the family is the nature of their contributions. In Table 3, it is evident that women contribute to the household in numerous ways. From the table, across the three studied LGAs of Isoko South, Udu and Ndokwa West, it was obvious that housewives contributions are multi-faceted. For example, 94.8% of the respondents contributed to the finances of their households. Also, 97%, 92%, 73% and 70.8% contributed to the payment of family food, payment of family clothes, properties acquisition and payment of school fees in the studied localities. Additionally, housewives are involved in providing school uniforms (71%) sending income to parents (69.1%), helping in the payment of rent for their homes (58.8%), selling in the family stores (30%) and worked in the family farms (27%). It is important to note that housewives were found to be involved in all the selected items in the home. However, some slight variations were evident from one LGA to the others. For example, while the contribution of housewives to payment for family food was 97.8% in Isoko South, it was slightly higher in Udu (98.7%) and slightly lower in Ndokwa West with 94.6%. A testimony to the fact that housewives participate in all the listed items was found in the extract for the FGD below;

“There is no aspect of the home where our hands are not seen. From morning till night we are all over the place in our homes to make sure all is well with the family. We cook, clean, do home works with children, mend clothes among other things. We need recognition and financial assistance to be able to do more and also help to generate income for ourselves, families and the entire nation”

Table.3: Women contributions to selected Items in the household

Item/Areas of women Contributions in the household	Isoko South (n=132)		Udu (n=132)		Ndokwa West (n=132)		% average for studied area
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Finance	122	92.3	127	96.4	126	95.8	94.8
Pay for family food	129	97.8	130	98.7	125	94.6	97
Properties acquisition	103	78.3	90	68.5	94	70.9	73
Payment of School fees	87	65.6	97	73.3	97	73.7	70.8
Parental income	72	54.9	105	79.3	97	73.3	69.1
School Uniforms	82	62.2	91	69.3	108	81.5	71
Work on the family farm	33	25.1	40	30.2	34	25.8	27
Sell in the family store	35	26.6	44	33.5	37	28.4	30
Pay for house rent	78	59.4	80	60.3	75	56.7	58.8
Pay for family clothes	118	89.5	128	97.3	118	89.2	92

Respondents could select more than one item

Apart from direct contributions of housewives to the family by involvement in financing various economic activities, women are also engaged in other unpaid and unmarketed domestic works. Table 4 revealed that for the sampled area, 100% of the women were engaged in bathing of children, 100% of them were involved in cooking for their families, 100% of them took part in washing family clothes and another 100% of them helped to clean their homes. Other domestic activities that the housewives participated in were: caring for sick children (99.5%), taking of children to school (78%), clearing of their compound (73.1%), helping their children with home works (69.2%), Ironing of clothes (55.3%) and caring for the elderly (54.3%).

Table.4: Women contributions to selected domestic works in the household

Item/Areas of women Contributions in the household	Isoko South (n=132)		Udu (n=132)		Ndokwa West (n=132)		% Average for studied area
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Bathing of children	132	100	132	100	132	100	100
Cooking	132	100	132	100	132	100	100
Washing of family Clothes	132	100	132	100	132	100	100
Cleaning of the home	132	100	132	100	132	100	100
Caring for elderly	77	58.6	63	47.8	75	56.5	54.3
Take children to school	89	67.4	117	88.6	102	77.6	78
Doing children home work	78	58.8	104	78.5	93	70.4	69.2
Caring for sick children	132	100	130	98.6	132	100	99.5
Ironing of clothes	72	54.3	70	53.4	77	58.3	55.3
Clearing the compound	92	69.9	100	75.7	98	73.9	73.1

Respondents could select more than one item

Waring [4] in her work title "The invisibility of women's work: The economics of local and global "bullshit" pointed out that most times, the domestic works and contributions of women are not recognised or measured as part of economic activities and are not recorded in the GDP of countries. According to her, often times, the domestic activities are undertaken wholly by the housewives with little or no assistance from the husbands in the household. In Table 5, the housewives gave their opinion on the level of participation of their husbands in the domestic works of their households. In the analysis, strongly agreed and agreed were combined as agreed while disagreed and strongly disagreed were merged as disagreed. From the table, 66.3% of the respondents in the studied area disagreed with the opinion that their husband participate in their household domestic work as against 36.7% who agreed that their men participate in their domestic works. A look at the table revealed that more housewives in Isoko South LGA disagreed with the statement that men participate in the domestic activities of their house hold compared to Udu LGA (64.2%) and Ndokwa West (59.1%). However, Ndokwa West had the highest households (40.9%) where men partners in domestic activities with Isoko South LGA being the least.

Table.5: Wives opinions on their husband participation in domestic works

LGAs	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Disagreed		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Isoko South	23	17.3	22	16.5	49	37.3	38	28.9	132	100
Udu	23	17.1	24	18.1	40	30.1	45	34.7	132	100
Ndokwa West	31	23.5	23	17.4	35	26.8	43	32.3	132	100
Total	77	19.4	69	17.3	124	31.4	126	31.9	396	100

Regarding whether the works of housewives were recognised and appreciated, Table 6 revealed that 66.7% of women were of the view that their works were not recognised or appreciated as against 33.3% of housewives who believed in the contrary. In the studied LGAs, Udu had the greatest population of housewives (25.8%) who voiced their views that their works are not recognised and appreciated, followed by 22.7% of Ndokwa West and 18.2% for Isoko South. Insights from the interviews and focus groups discussion revealed more on the subject of recognition and appreciation of women's work which Waring [4] and Tirath [8] described as invisible due to lack of this recognition of women activities in the household as presented below.

"We do all the works in the home without any assistance from the men yet they take all the glory. Take for example; our family has over five plot lands where we normally farm every year. I work day and night with my children on the plots of land but all the farms belong to my husband who is seen as the head. That is what culture and tradition made it to be. All the cash from sales from the farms are given to my husband who owns the lands. What are my own in all these? I am the wife to my husband. The farmlands and my humble self are owned by my husband. I am considered the property of my

husband. No matter the level of my involvement in our household activities, all my efforts are seen as part the achievement of my husband. I feel that women should be respected and treated as their husband in our communities”

-----**Excerpt from an interview in Udu LGA**

“Everything for our house na me de do am. Na me de feed the house but I no go fit open my mouth. Even to say thank you sef no de. All I de get na beating and to remind me say na him marri me. No small welo done. Make dem dey thank us and give us change to speak. Make dem call meeting to talk to our husband.”

(I do everything in our home. I am the bread winner of our home, yet I can't open my mouth to say a word. There is no form of appreciation; instead what I get in return for the job in the home is beating and constant reminder to me that he is the one that married me. No appreciation at all. We deserve some commendations. We need a platform to address this challenge in a meeting)

-----**A section of FGD in Isoko South**

“Nobodi won know wetin we women de do for our homes. Na we de make things beta for our home and helep out husbands. When thing de do well, na man make am happen. Every bad thing na the woman. Dem node see all the good work wen we de do to move the family forward”

(Nobody cares to know what we women do to help our families. We make things better in our homes and help out our husbands. When things are good, it is he men that are responsible. Every bad thing is caused by the woman. Nobody see all the good works we do to move our families forward)

-----**A portion of FGD in Ndokwa West LGA**

Table.6: Wives opinions on whether their husband recognise or appreciate their contributions

LGAs	Contributions recognised and appreciated		Contributions not recognised and appreciated		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Isoko South	40	10.1	72	18.2	112	100
Udu	48	12.1	102	25.8	150	100
Ndokwa West	44	11.1	90	22.7	134	100
Total	132	33.3	264	66.7	396	100

On the reasons for lack of appreciation for housewives works, opinions from the interviews and FGDs summarised the answers as found below in the extracts.

“This is Nigeria. Men rule the society and they dominate everything. Every achievements of the woman or housewife is seen as part of what the man has **done**” ---**an FDG Udu LGA**

“Well men by nature are proud and this pride is in everything around them. Telling a woman thank you is to some of them is a taboo and a sign of weakness. The answer to your question is pride of men”

-----**Excerpt from an FGD in Ndokwa West LGA**

“One thing about women is that we are powerless because men usually own lands, make decision regarding the usage and allocate to women. This places men at advantage over women. All her productions are seen as his – including herself”

-----**A part of interview in Udu LGA**

“Man de make money and e go giv the wife. He go build the house and he go go pay school fix. Becos of dis, e come be say na only am de work. No bodi de count the one wen woman de do. She go born pikin, take care of am, she go wash clothes of everybody, cook giv the house, take care of pikin wen de sik. Man no see this one as work becos e no buyam with money so e no be anitin foram. So he no fit value am. Na oly e money be sometin”

(Man makes money and gives to the wife. He builds the house, pays school fees and assumed he is the only one working because of this. Women works are not accounted for. She gives birth to a child, cares for the child, washes clothes for all in the home, cooks for everybody and takes care of the sick child. Men do not see all these women works as anything

because they are not paid for with money, they are not regarded as anything and hence they are of no value to the man. It is when cash is involved that men see it as valuable)

-----An FGD extract from Ndokwa West LGA

How do housewives perceived the seemingly invisibilities of their contributions to their households? These excerpts from the FGDs give insights into their feeling as presented below.

“Weting we go fit do? We go take am like that. Na so God givam to them. Na their luck”

(What can we do? We accept it as our fate. It was God that created it like this. It is the luck of men)

“Frankly speaking, it is dejecting to work so hard and someone else gets all the glory. That is what it is. We shall be pushing for recognition and appreciation and equal rights over time. We must continue to fight for our place”

“Men hide their incompetence and laziness under the cover of their gender. All the works that women do are allotted to them. This kills the productive zeal of women to be creative, knowing that the praise will go to another person and that recognition will not come their way”

“Something must be done urgently to address the issue. Men must be told in clear terms that we need to be recognise and appreciated for who we are and for what we do to assist in the upkeep of the family. This cannot go on forever. Men should learn to give women their rightful place and appreciate them”

“It is very sad that women and their works are made invisible by the patriarchal world we found ourselves. Mechanism must be put in place to remedy the situation for the better. If we are duly appreciated, we can do more. Let us say that some women equally get praise by their spouses, but the majority of us get nothing for our hard works. We are partners with men. We are not trying to take their place, but asking that we should be treated right for equity and justice so that we can achieve a fair world”

IV. DISCUSSION

The goal of this paper is to study the invisibility of housewives works in Delta State with a view of understanding the role of women in household upkeeps. The specific questions which this study seeks to answer are: (1) Do women contribute to the household in Delta State? (2) What is the nature of women contributions to household? (3) Are the contributions of housewives recognised and appreciated? (4) What are the reasons, if any, for not recognizing women works and making them invisible? (5) How do housewives perceive the invisibility of their contributions to the family?

Evidence from this study indicates housewives are big contributors to household upkeep as 98.3% of them are part of their households' upkeep in the studied area. Thus, this study agrees with the position of Waring[4] that women are major contributors to household incomes through their engagements in different economic activities. From the perspective of Waring [4], housewives activities form bulk of production arrangement in farm labour requirement for crops in most rural economies. The finding from this study is also in line with the view of Deirdre [13] that 88% of women contribute to household through their farming activities and 99% women contribute to the economy of New Zealand through their horticultural activities. However, according to Deirdre [13], inspite of their huge contributions women were excluded from the decision making process. Like Deirdre, the study by Shamsu-Deen [1] in Ghana revealed that 84.4% of women are involved in agricultural productivity which enabled them to contribute to the income to household basic needs than most men and that inspite of the huge contributions to the household in Ghana, they are still excluded from the decision making process and discriminated against and their contributions rendered invisible by this exclusion in decision making. The impact of the exclusion is that, though both men and women are involved in different tasks in agricultural production, it is only the technologies for the production of men's crops that receive attention – creating greater invisibility of the woman's works and activities which are crucial for economic survival – supporting the view of Tirath [8] that large part of the male dominated patriarchal society undervalued the contributions of women's labour in the household, even though immense and very labourious work is done by women in both rural and urban areas, which helped in enhancing productivity of the men in the household too, hence, there is a need to "recognise this 'invisible' work and appreciate it,

The result from the study highlighted the fact that both domestic and non-domestic activities, the contributions of women were visible as they contributed to the finance (94.8%), pay for family food (97%), pay for family clothes (992%); helped in properties acquisition for their household (73%), helped their household in payment of school fees (70.8), provision of

school (71%), and assisted parents financially (69.1%). Also, housewives nature of contributions was in the area of payment of house rent (58.8%), selling in their family stores and work on the family farms. In purely unpaid domestic matters, 100% of the women were engaged in bathing of children, 100% of them were involved in cooking for their families, 100% of them took part in washing family clothes and another 100% of them helped to clean their homes. Other domestic activities that the housewives took part in were: caring for sick children (99.5%), taking of children to school (78%), clearing of their compound (73.1%), helping their children with home works (69.2%), Ironing of clothes (55.3%) and caring for the elderly (54.3%). These areas of housewives contribution are well documented. BSR and ICRW [6] opined that women works are in the area of non-domestic and unpaid domestic works which was estimated to be as high as 75% worldwide. Mark [14] and Jonathan [15] listed the works as mostly unpaid and not marketed duties such as: taking care of women health, reproductive health including child bearing and rearing which most time prevent women from fully partaking in the economy and free the man for greater productivity. From this study, only some men (36.7%) actually take part in rendering assistance to their wives while a greater proportion (66.3%) do not take part in domestic works with their wives. This again, supports the view by Shamsu-Deen [1] that more women are responsible for domestic work including farming activities than men.

This research also indicates that 66.7% of women were of the view that their works were not recognised or appreciated as against 33.3% of housewives who believed in the contrary. This position is in congruent with BSR and ICRW [6] that, inspite of the immense contributions of women, their works are never recognise and quantified appropriately. Hence, Tirath [8] described the neglect of housewives works as perpetuation of gender based inequalities which result in other forms of discrimination and unequal societal norms. She advocated for full recognition and valuation of the women work, since such measurement of the unpaid labour of women would aid towards formulating suitable strategies for empowering women. From her perspective, Waring [4] believed that women must be recognised for who they are and for their contributions and that the role and works of women on the planet are intimately related to the goal of comprehensive socio-economic and political development. This work according to her is vital for the development of all societies and for the quality of life on our planet. Put in other words, Waring sees the empowerment and recognition of housewives as a way of moving the society to another level of development socially and economically and to avoid and overcome gender inequality. The position of Waring agrees with BSR and ICRW [6] and Matthew et al [16], that believed that overcoming gender inequality will not result from specific isolated programme, but from a comprehensive approach that involves multiple sectors and stakeholders using holistic and integrated approach to women economic development which will address systemic barriers to women empowerment including the recognition of women and their contributions to households and general development.

Many reasons accounted for the lack of recognition of women and their works as evident in this study. In the first place, Delta State and indeed Nigeria is a patriarchal society with a great level of disdain for women. This put women at disadvantage. Secondly, because of the male domination of the society, men usually take major decisions which affect the women because they hardly have a choice, they resigned to fate especially as the means of production such as land is controlled by the men; as the excerpt from interview revealed:

One thing about women is that we are powerless because men usually own lands, make decision regarding the usage and allocate to women. This places men at advantage over women. All her productions are seen as his – including herself.

Another issue regarding the powerlessness of women and the lack of recognition for their contributions to the household is the nature of their contributions. Because the man comes with money in cash, see himself as the only one who is engaged in productive activities especially when women domestic works do not generate any physical cash, but may actually surpass the cash contributions of the men. Because the productions of the wives are unpaid for and consumed within the home, these have no values to the man without cash presentation to the family. The reasons given in this study as far to why the work of women are not recognised are similar given by other works [1, 4, 8]. Earlier reason given by these work are; male dominance of the society, nature of women works and men ownership of lands.

The impact of the lack of recognition for the women or housewives is that they have been psychologically traumatise. To some of them, the way they and their works/contributions are perceived is their destiny and see it as what fate had for them and accepts to live with it in the midst of the unpleasant situation. To some housewives in this study, though they acknowledged the situation as bad, advocated that women should push for recognition and fight for their rights to ensure equality. Another dimension to the lack of recognition and appreciation for women works is the assertion that the

productive zeal of women to be creative will diminish over time, based on the fact that the praise for their achievements are given to persons order than them. The perception of women regarding the invisibility of their efforts came in a call that the situation though bad should be remedied for a fair society as found excerpt from one of FGDs below

“It is very sad that women and their works are made invisible by the patriarchal world we found ourselves. Mechanism must be put in place to remedy the situation for the better. If we are duly appreciated, we can do more. Let us say that some women equally get praise by their spouses, but the majority of us get nothing for our hard works. We are partners with men. We are not trying to take their place, but asking that we should be treated right for equity and justice so that we can achieve a fair world”

V. CONCLUSION

It is explicit from this study that the contributions of housewives to the household development are many from the non-domestic to domestic sphere even though grossly unrecognised and appreciated. It is important that that these contributions be recognised and appreciated in Delta State and indeed Nigeria so that they could be harness for statewide and national development. The recognition of women and their works will minimise issue of gender inequality and bring about a fair society where both wives as well as their husbands will be happy. Additionally, the recognition of women and their works will also bring about the formulation of suitable strategies for planning and empowering women. It will also bring about adequate calculation of GDP which international agencies use for assistance of countries, and full estimation of our economy and generate the right data for planning and precise rating of our economy in the international arena. To achieve this, men must see themselves as partners with the women rather than competitors by providing the needed supports to their wives and all women to achieve a society that is fully developed without gender discriminations. Workshops and training must be organised to address the issue. The expectation of the state is for all round development including capital and human development. Development process that takes care of only male is not holistic. We must all strive to fulfill the words of Waring that the role and work of women on the planet are intimately related to the goal of comprehensive socio-economic and political development. This work is vital for the development of all societies and for the quality of life on our planet. It is only in this sense we can achieve a balance development devoid of injustice and gender inequality.

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