

Researchers

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Timeline

2019-2021

Sample Size

3,000 participants

Research Implemented by IPA

Yes

The Impact of a Socio-Emotional Skills Training in Nigeria

Abstract

Recent evidence has pointed to the importance of socio-emotional skills development for improving business outcomes and for helping to close the gender gap between male- and female-owned small businesses. The World Bank Africa Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) are partnering with the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to evaluate the impact of a program called Agro-Processing, Productivity Enhancement and Livelihood Improvement Support (APPEALS)—which provides business and technical skills, an in-kind cash grant, and mentorship—with and without the provision of an added socio-emotional skills training delivered to both men and women business owners. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the team has pivoted to examine the impact of a SES messaging campaign delivered through WhatsApp videos and interactive voice response, with messages targeting the expected gender-related impacts of COVID-19 on the labor market.

Policy Issue

Even when women's educational outcomes improve relative to men, labor market disparities persist. Some evidence suggests that training in socio-emotional skills (sometimes referred to as soft skills or noncognitive skills) may improve labor outcomes, particularly for women.¹ This project examines whether a messaging campaign focusing on socio-emotional

skills can help individuals mitigate the expected impacts of COVID-19. Specifically, messaging focused on COVID-19 prevention, stress and anger management, expressing needs, working together, and preparing for the future may affect how those receiving the campaign share household responsibilities and decision-making, anticipate the feelings and needs of others, resolve conflict, and adapt their mindsets and businesses to the changing environment.

Context of the Evaluation

Agriculture plays an important role in Nigeria's economy, contributing 21 percent of its GDP and engaging 60 percent of its workforce.² Women play an important role in the Nigerian agricultural sector, representing more than 60 percent of the rural workforce.³ However, women face a number of barriers, including a lack of business and technical skills and financial literacy, limited access to start-up capital, gender norms, and marginalization in terms of land property rights, inheritance, and credit access.

The Nigeria Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) secured a credit for US \$200 million from the World Bank to implement the Agro-Processing, Productivity Enhancement and Livelihood Improvement Support (APPEALS) project. The APPEALS project aims to enhance the agricultural productivity of small and medium scale farmers and improve value addition along eleven priority value chains (poultry, cassava, rice, aquaculture, cashews, maize, wheat, tomatoes, ginger, dairy, and cocoa).

A significant component of the APPEALS project—the Women and Youth Empowerment Program component—will promote entrepreneurship in the agribusiness sector and targets young men aged 18 and 40 years and women over age 18. After group activities can safely resume in Nigeria, the WYEP will provide beneficiaries with business and value-chain specific training, an in-kind grant of approximately US \$10,000 to support the start-up of the beneficiary's agribusiness, and mentorship.

Details of the Intervention

Researchers with the World Bank's Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) are working with IPA and FMARD to evaluate socio-emotional skills messaging during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Socio-emotional skills messaging will be delivered to beneficiaries of the WYEP program, and possibly to a selected partner (or parent). In this way, researchers can examine if impact improves with the participation of a "support" person in the household. If individuals have WhatsApp and opt-in to the program, they may receive 1 to 4 messaging campaigns per week over 3 months. The length of the intervention may be expanded depending on participation and the length of the pandemic. Each campaign will consist of one video or phone call, and possibly a few interactive questions.

Results and Policy Lessons

Study ongoing; results forthcoming.

Sources

[1] Heckman, J. J., Stixrud, J., & Urzua, S. (2006). The effects of cognitive and noncognitive abilities on labor market outcomes and social behavior. *Journal of Labor economics*, 24(3), 411-482; Iacovone, L., Campos, F., Frese, M., Goldstein, M., Johnson, H., McKenzie, D., & Mensmann, M. (2018). Personal Initiative Training Leads to Remarkable Growth of Women-Owned Small Businesses in Togo.

[2] National Bureau of Statistics, 2019. "Nigerian Gross Domestic Product Report (Q4 and Full Year 2018)." https://africacheck.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/GDP_Report_Q4_Full_Year_2018-1.pdf

[3] British Council Nigeria, 2012. "Gender in Nigeria Report 2012 – Improving the Lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria".

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