The Impact of a Socio-Emotional Skills Training in Nigeria

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. Researchers are partnering with the World Bank and the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to evaluate the impact of a program providing business and technical skills, an in-kind cash grant, and mentorship with and without the provision of socio-emotional skills training delivered to both men and women business owners.

Policy Issue
Evidence from recent evaluations of the impact of business training and grants on business outcomes has been mixed. One common feature, however, is that women-owned businesses appear to benefit considerably less from these trainings than do male-owned businesses. Other recent evidence has pointed to the importance of socio-emotional skills development for business outcomes, and these skills may help close the gender gap in profits for small enterprises. However, little is known about which specific skills contribute to business profitability for male- and female-owned businesses. For example, interpersonal skills may be the key to network-building and belongingness in male-dominated sectors, or to negotiating decision-making and costs in household enterprises, while intrapersonal skills may prove more important if women need support as they look for resources, prioritize their business and long-term returns, and develop their sense of self-efficacy and resilience. This evaluation will shed light on which socio-emotional skills matter most for economic empowerment, and if and how this differs by gender.

Evaluation Context
Agriculture plays an important role in Nigeria’s economy, contributing 21 percent of its GDP and engaging 60 percent of its workforce. Women play an important role in the Nigerian agricultural sector, representing more than 60 percent of the rural workforce. However, women face a number of barriers, including 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 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. 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 are partnering with the World Bank and the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to evaluate the impact of the WYEP component of the APPEALS project with and without the provision of socio-emotional skills training delivered to both men and women. Research will randomly assign 3,000 eligible men and women, who have been selected to participate in the program, in three states, (Lagos, Kano, and Kogi) to one of five groups:

1. Participants receive the WYEP program, which includes business and value chain technical training, business plan screening, an in-kind grant linked to items listed in the business plans, and mentorship;
2. Participants receive the WYEP program and intrapersonal skills training;
3. Participants receive the WYEP program and interpersonal skills training;
4. Participants receive the WYEP program and both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills training; and
5. Participants in the comparison group, who do not receive the WYEP program or any additional socio-emotional skills training at the time of the study.

Participants will be further randomly assigned to receive additional reinforcement via SMS from a partner or relative.

Researchers will conduct an initial survey to measure the impact of the program with and without socio-emotional skills training on business practices, production, sales, profits, household decision-making power, and household level welfare indicators such as consumption and well-being. Researchers will also study measures of socio-emotional skills including behavioral measures (e.g. number of social engagements, involvement in decision-making) and attitudes (e.g. perceptions of available economic opportunities, aspirations, gender norms and beliefs). Researchers will conduct follow-up surveys one and two years after the initial survey collecting the same information.

**Results and Policy Lessons**

Study ongoing; results forthcoming.

**Sources**