



The Socio-Economic Relations of Military Wives in Lagos 1920 to 1993: A Contextual-Historical Analysis

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Abstract

This paper offers a historical perspective on the socio-economic relations of military wives in Lagos. Since the incorporation of women into the barracks in 1905, not much is known about their socio-economic relations because of a “closed society,” gender and culture. Despite the challenges of inequality in a male-dominated profession, military wives navigated through the socio-economic relations of Lagos, the career of their military husbands, charity and humanitarian activities. This paper argues that military wives were visible in the socio-economic relations of Lagos, service politics and diplomacy. Using primary and secondary sources of data, films, photographs, official reports and participant observation to substantiate its claim, this paper establishes that the involvement of military wives in socio-economic relations contributed to national development, cooperation and collaboration. The achievements of these women have been attributed to the support of their military husbands and the influence of the officers’ wives association. This paper concludes that the empowerment of this group by the government can engender further developments in the socio-economic relations of Lagos.

Keywords: Contextual-historical analysis, development, Lagos, military wives, socio-economic relations.

Introduction

The socio-economic relations of military wives in Lagos have remained a neglected theme in knowledge production because of culture, environment, and sex stereotypes. Consequently, this group continued to be marginalised in empowerment opportunities and social investment programmes of the government. The term “military wives” otherwise known as “dependants” in military records, refers to women married to officers and men in the force, as opposed to female soldiers who passed through the academy. “Socio-economic relations” on the other hand, has defiled a common definition because of different schools of thought and disciplines. Nevertheless, socio-economic relations as used in this paper suggests that there are certain elements in the

interactions of military wives with the wider society that are both social and economic in nature and character. It is also seen as the interaction between the social and economic conditions of a people (*Longman Dictionary*, 2009: 1670).

Interestingly, economic history revealed that the social activities of a people cannot thrive without economic and political organisation, hence the close connection between politics and socio-economic life. It has also been established that socio-economic relations are critical because of natural endowments, the comparative advantage of nations, and the global economy. Military wives engaged in socio-economic relations to navigate their "close society," reinforcing their gender and power, cooperation and collaboration with the wider society.

Historically, Lagos is an essential part of Lagos State which lies between longitudes 20. 42'E and latitude 60 22'N respectively (Ajetumobi, 2017: 1; Dioka, 2001:2). Its population was put at about 5million with abundant industries, trade and commerce. The rise and development of Lagos have been attributed to external influence and military factors. For instance, in the 16th century, the Bini armies conquered Lagos and established a military base known as *Eko*, meaning "war camp" (Dioka, 2001:24-25). They also instituted a political system that has survived into modern Lagos. In the early years of the Bini invasion, the warriors wanted to make the Bini city a staging post for the invasion of other Yoruba towns but the expansionist policy of the Bini warriors failed because of the untimely demise of Oba Orhoghua (c.1550-78).

There was also European imperialism in the nineteenth century which led to the British conquest of Lagos in 1851. And by 1861, the British had concluded the annexation of Lagos and the abolition of slavery and the slave trade. To consolidate their imperial policy in Lagos, a Consular administration was introduced with a concomitant modern army to protect the British interests and perhaps halt the incursion of the French. With the establishment of the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) in 1863, the Lagos Battalion was formed in 1901 as a unit of the WAFF and its barracks located in Marina, Military Street, and the Race Course Environs (Miller, 1961:108; Haywood and Clarke, 1964:5).It is noted that the invasion of Lagos by foreign armies was stimulated by the factors of geography, economic consideration and the advantage of ports and harbours (Cole, 1975:8-9; Olukoju, 1993: 91-93).

My objective in this paper is to explore the socio-economic relations of military wives in Lagos and also contribute to the growing literature on women's history in Nigeria. A few works exist on military wives compared to a plethora of studies on the socio-economic development of Lagos. These include (Babangida, 1988;Iheanacho, 2016; Nzemeka, 2020; Mama, 1998;Olukoju, 1993;Byfield, 2007; Constantine, 2017; Faluyi, 2001; Otto, 2014), and others. Despite the interesting perspectives of these scholars, the socio-economic relations of military wives in Lagos have remained a neglected theme.

In filling this gap, we draw on qualitative, secondary and primary sources of data, films and photographs. The study also benefited from the personal

observation of the researcher who worked in the military for over two decades. These materials and personal experience did not only enrich the paper but also helped clarify grey areas. Therefore, we interrogate the following: What was the nature of socio-economic relations of military wives in colonial Lagos? To what extent did the socio-economic relations of military wives develop in post-colonial Lagos? And what were the challenges of women's socio-economic relations in Lagos? In my attempt to answer these questions, the paper is divided into three main sections. Section one discusses the socio-economic relations of military wives in colonial Lagos. In section two, the paper examines the development of socio-economic relations of military wives in post-colonial Lagos, while section three explores the challenges of women's socio-economic relations in Lagos. And the conclusion of the paper brings together the findings and recommendations.

Socio-economic relations of military wives in colonial Lagos

The socio-economic relations of women in society began in the distant past. For instance, women's role in war camps revolved around domesticity, reproduction, and socio-economic life (Omon; Aworawo; Aluede, 2020). In their social engagements, warriors' wives interacted with the larger society through marriage celebrations, religious feasts, funeral rites, coronation and cultural enactments (Akinjogbin, 1981:336). Warriors' wives and female camp followers contributed to community development, rebuilding of broken walls, provision of victuals and treatment of wounded soldiers as was the case in the Egba and Ijaiye Wars (Awe and Olutoye, 1998:125).

Apart from social relations, women also played a remarkable role in the economy of war camps. They were involved in agriculture, production and manufacturing, trade and markets to support the home and war effort. Hence, Boserup said, "Africa is the region of female farming par excellence, even though, their activities were lacking in modern and scientific methods" (Boserup, 1970: 16-17). The above illustration forms the background to the socio-economic relations of military wives in Nigeria.

Also, in the colonial state, indigenous soldiers' wives and their European counterparts played an active role in housekeeping, group relations and diplomacy. Thus, the editor of the *Times* wrote, "Women are the great home-makers - social weavers - and they have begun to use their gifts for imperial purposes. They are following up the fight and struggle of men and finding ways to bind the citizens of the Empire together." (*Times*, July 2, 1910).

With the reversal of the policy on women's exclusion in the colony in 1905 and 1920 respectively, economic relations developed between military wives and their civilian neighbours (Wilkinson Report, 1905; (Ukpabi, 1975: 101; Lugard, 1922:142). They engaged in compound gardens where they planted vegetables, maize, cowpea, tomatoes, groundnut, pepper, onions, cassava, okro, ginger, pineapples, garlic, and others (Nzemeka 2020: 22). The women also planted perennial fruit trees in the gardens for food security. Some of the fruit trees

were citrus, cashew, guava, mangoes, avocado, breadfruits, and paw-paw, to mention but a few. According to one of the colonial officers:

We were the first occupants of this house and my wife succeeded in making the garden a thing of beauty. We planted many fruit trees, but, as has happened to so many colonial officials, we left Nigeria before any of them had borne; it has been little consolation to hear ... that the fruit was plentiful and delicious (Burns, 1949:102).

This suggests that the European wives were actively involved in compound gardens and were often supported by their husbands to avoid food shortages. European wives, unlike their indigenous counterparts, cultivated flowers in their gardens for the beautification of their environments, as well as a symbol of love. Thus, a colonial wife writes, "I brought from Sierra Leone, twenty seeds of clitoria, the beautiful sapphire blue pea, a tiny packet of *Ipomeaquamoclit*, and a few seeds of a brilliant scarlet miniature convolvulus. Their descendants are now spread all over the country, so much so, that they have often been mentioned to me as growing wild" (Larymore, 1911: 238-239).

Some of the flowers in Lagos barracks included zinnias, balsams, marigold, petunias, sunflowers, and others. The flowers had spread to other barracks, Government Reservations Areas (GRAs), government offices and homes in Lagos. Apart from gardening, European wives were also involved in animal husbandry. They kept horses, camels, donkeys, cows and fowls in the barracks. The animals were usually maintained in enclosures because of dangerous reptiles and floods. Although, the majority of the women hired traditional horsemen called *Doki-boys* who managed their horses. Some of the animals serve as beasts of burden, a means of transportation and a source of food. On the other hand, cows and oxen were employed in tilling the ground for agriculture, dairy production, and meat, while eggs were obtained from birds kept in cages and enclosures, some of which were sold to the public.

The case of indigenous soldiers' wives was different. This is because they allowed their birds to roam about and roost in the evenings, while others perched on rooftops and tree branches which affected production. The challenges of livestock production included the lack of veterinary doctors, tsetse flies, drought, theft, and mad cow disease. Other factors that hindered women's economic relations were the frequent posting of military husbands, early retirement from service, and the death of military husbands. Military wives also interface with the wider society through trade and markets. They bought essential goods in bulk because they had ready money to spend from their husbands' maintenance allowance, thus market women fondly called them "cash madams" in praise of their financial security.

Because the Colonial Service (hereafter CS) was a male-dominated profession there was role differentiation. While the men focused on military duties and colonial diplomacy, European wives engaged in public affairs, service politics, and humanitarian activities. In service politics and diplomacy, colonial wives

assisted their husbands in the public affairs and social relations between the colonisers and the colonised. Lady Lugard was reputed to have sent several private correspondences to Joseph Chamberlain on the need for policy reversal on women's exclusion in the colony and the need to improve the living condition of colonial servicemen (Perham, 1960: 79). In the humanitarian sphere, Flora Lugard noted, "We have abolished slavery, and, as a consequence, it has been assumed that the labour which once supplied the great industries of the world has ceased to have any value" (Shaw, 1905: 39). She was equally reputed to have used *The Times*, to publicise colonial rule in British West Africa which added to imperial narratives in *A Tropical Dependency*.

Similarly, Violet Bourdillon was known to have danced with the Lagos Market Women (LMW) led by Madam Pelewura and on account of this, a clothing material was named in her honour known as "Lady Bourdillonlappa" (Pearce, 1983: 273-274). She also demonstrated her benevolence by hosting indigenous soldiers' wives who lost their husbands in the Second World War at Government House, Marina, Lagos. Because of her sterling qualities, the editor of *West African Pilot* wrote, "She Stands Unique" (*West African Pilot*, 15 May 1943). It was probably for this reason that "a ragged young urchin ...gave the Bourdillons, his welcome - Hello Guv!"(Pearce, 1983:269).Some of the European wives involved in intergroup relations in Lagos included Sylvia Leith-Ross, Lady Alan Burns, Betty Moresby-White and Lady Cameron, to mention but a few. These women were not trapped between cultures, racial inequality, and rank in empire building. Conversely, the lots of indigenous soldiers' wives were not so because of their inability to learn the social script and protocols of Victorian women, thus they were socially excluded in the colony.

In the Second World War, European wives assisted their husbands. They were unofficially involved in the offices as administrative staff, language translators, and bookkeepers, to mention but a few (Smith, 1969:125). Through their war effort, they created spaces of authority in the colony. Their participation also helped close aspects of gender inequality in the public space, a condition that relegated their roles to the private domain.

To consolidate their gender and power in the colony, European wives established the Women Progressive Club (WPC) and Women's Corona Society (WCS). The WCS subsequently became an avenue of bonding with other women (Callaway, 1987:218).Through these associations, colonial wives engage in social developments, such as the provision of schools, community relations, and the empowerment of women. The Corona Schools in Lagos gradually became a melting pot of culture and a centre of learning for children of all races. In the succeeding years, the history of Corona Schools became an inspiration for new and emerging private nursery/primary and secondary schools in Lagos. It is clear from our discussion that women's socio-economic activities in the colonial period were not only robust but complementary. They also facilitated the work of empire and socio-economic relations.

The development of socio-economic relations of military wives in post-colonial Lagos

There was change and continuity in the socio-economic development of military wives in the post-colonial period. The nation's independence in 1960 and the departure of European wives marked a turning point in the history of indigenous military wives. They established the Army Wives Association (AWA) as an outlet for social and humanitarian activities to replicate the work of WPC and WCS in the colony. According to a former first lady, "It was also set up as a result of the peculiar nature of soldiering, which makes it normal for officers' wives to be abandoned many times in a lifetime" (Babangida, 1988: 63).

In the early stage, the activities of the association were almost invisible because membership was drawn from both the officers and junior officers' wives. Hence, the association was perceived as a gossip outlet and a place for showing off their husbands' ranks. This negative perception discouraged most military officers from registering their wives as members. To sanitize the association, the junior officers' wives (non-commissioned officers' wives) were excluded from membership (Babangida, 1988:65). This consequently led to the change of name from AWA to the Nigerian Army Officers' Wives Association (NAOWA) in 1963.

The exclusion of junior officers' wives from the association brought far-reaching and wide-ranging discontent that had survived into the modern barracks: First, it created dichotomy and difference between officers' and junior officers' wives. Second, it contributed to the indifference of wives of junior officers in the humanitarian and empowerment programmes of the barracks since they were not involved in the planning and execution of the project. And third, it made wives of junior officers perceive their husbands' profession as a stop-gap since the rank of an officer is also the rank of his wife.

No sooner had NAOWA changed its name and structure than it introduced a set of guidelines to achieve its mandate: It opened a secretariat in Dodan Barracks, Ikoyi, Lagos, with secretarial staff, introduced a logo, identity cards for members, code of conduct and a constitution to guide its operation. On the leadership question, a decision was reached by the association that the wife of Chief of Army Staff in the country should be the president of the association while the wife of a Commander in every military unit would function as the Branch President (Babangida 1988:64).

Fig. 1 NAOWA Members with NAFRC Staff Officers at the Nigerian Armed Forces Resettlement Centre, Oshodi, Lagos, May 17, 2013.



Source: *NAFRCOWA Magazine*, June 2013. p.26.

The purpose of this arrangement was to introduce class, discipline and a sense of belonging. It was also intended to help drive the mandate and vision of the association. Similarly, the personality of the wife of the Chief-of-Army Staff would help bridge the gap between the association and the military authorities. Therefore, with the structures in place, the association began the empowerment of women in Lagos barracks to make them self-reliant. The programme was necessary because military wives ought to be self-reliant and also engage in nation-building. The association also embarked on the provision of nursery and primary schools in Lagos barracks, donation of medical facilities, HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign, and construction of markets, among others.

Presently, there exist over twenty nursery/ primary schools established by the Nigerian Army Officers' Wives Associations (NAOWA) the Nigerian Air Force Wives Association (NAFOWA) and the Naval Officers' Wives Association (NOWA) in Lagos. And since the 1980s, the associations had set up at least a nursery/ primary school and a crèche in Nigerian barracks (Fadare, 2010: 106). This development has increased the enrolment of civilian children in NAOWA/NAFOWA/ NOWA Schools thereby contributing to robust civil/military relations.

The socialisation programme of the association was equally robust as women interfaced with the wider society. Newly married couples in the barracks were taught military traditions and adjustment to barracks life. The benefits of these programmes cannot be over-emphasised. This is because they assisted women to conform to barracks culture. The transmission of culture and socialisation is not limited to Nigeria. According to the film *Army Wives Season 4*, a General's wife said: "I have organised educational counselling for most families in the community, but more importantly was my adult education programme for military spouses, as well as the series of interactive sessions where domestic

violence and its psychological effect were discussed among military families”(Film. *Army wives, Season 4*, 1987).

This gives us a broader view of the socialisation programme of women in military stations and sub-cultures. The social relations of military wives in Nigeria became expanded in the 1960s with the opening of foreign missions and the appointment of their husbands as Defence Attaché. Through this programme, military wives interact with wives of other diplomats, establish friendships and also engaged in trade fairs and exhibitions. Some others use the opportunity to improve their knowledge through University education where they obtained degrees and diplomas (Babangida, 1988: 26). Apart from the advantage of interactions, cooperation and collaboration, some of the women subsequently created employments in the informal sector of the economy after retirement thereby contributing to national development.

During the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), military wives associations assisted bereaved families through donations and counselling similar to the activities in the pre-colonial and colonial years. But their role was largely felt in peace-building after the Nigerian Civil War where they provided relief materials to the internally displaced persons (IDPs). They also collaborated with various non-governmental organisations during the war such as the Nigerian Women’s Organisation (NWO), Caritas Fathers, the International Red Cross Associations, to mention but a few (Wall, 2015: 199-200). Their activities and advice gave relief and succour to the displaced persons

And no sooner had the war ended than military wives in Ikeja and Ojo Cantonments, Lagos, began the sensitisation of aggrieved women, particularly on the dangers of hate speech and unwholesome epithet in the barracks (Integration of the Ibos, 1969). This effort paid off as women realised that they were all victims of war. The post-war years also witnessed the association’s involvement in the supply of relief material, food items and bedding materials to the Blind Centre, Oshodi, Lagos and the inmates of the Modupe Cole Memorial Home, as well as Save Our Soul Homes (SOS), Lagos. These efforts probably attest to their motto “service to humanity” (Ezekiel, 2007: 28-29).

Nevertheless, the empowerment outreach programmes of military wives were fraught with challenges such as the lack of funds, unwholesome behaviour of women leaders, the lack of continuity of programmes and the retirement of officers. Despite these challenges, NAOWA and her sister associations have contributed to the employment of women as “highway managers,” i.e. sweepers of roads and corridors, health attendants, ward maids, office attendants and teachers in NAOWA Schools.

Fig. 2 NAOWA donates to the less-privileged



Source: *New Soja Army Magazine*, 2011, p.10

The economic relations of military wives continued after independence. The continuity and change were visible in the compound garden system and female farming programme in the barracks. For instance, compound gardens were allowed in the barracks but restricted to the undeveloped plots as was the case in the colonial period. Some of the crops cultivated were potatoes, yam, cassava, millet, rice, sorghum, maize, and okro, among others. Also, all-year-round crops were grown and these included sugar cane, banana, melon, tomatoes, beans, groundnuts, pepper, cabbage, vegetables, and onions.

Perennial fruit trees such as citrus, coconut, pawpaw, avocado, guava, grapefruit, mangoes and cashew were also planted in the barracks (Mallo, 1993:44). The advantage of these crops was immense because they required less labour and less capital. More importantly, is the fact that they contributed to the food security of the barracks. Apart from the individual efforts at food production, NAOWA also obtained arable land from the Lagos State Government and started NAOWA Farm Project on the Ojo-Badagry stretch to boost food production following food shortages and increase in the population of military families after the war.

The farms engaged some youths in the area and through this; they earned income for the home. The involvement of youths in agriculture was beneficial because it minimised crime and criminality in the Badagry area and adjoining districts during the period. Varieties of food crops were produced as well as animal production. Trade and markets also connect military wives with the wider society, particularly, the *mammy markets* in military barracks patronised by civilian neighbours. In the *mammy markets*, imported and general goods were bought and sold at affordable prices which made it a delight for the public. Since the inception of *mammy markets*, military wives have jealously guided its operations because they were solely set up for them until the 1990s when it

transformed into private/ partnership arrangements. These markets have been rebuilt as model markets and lockup shops with civilian traders and soldiers' wives dominating the trade.

Immediately after the war, there were food shortages in the Lagos Barracks and the country in general. (Oguntoyinbo and Richards, 1977; Nafzinger, 1972; Wallace, 1981). The attempt by the Gowon regime to encourage food production led to the introduction of the Second National Development Plans (1970-1974), but this did not succeed because of a lack of political will and policy discontinuities (Nwankwo, 1986: 9-11). The nation's food crisis was also worsened following the collapse of oil prices and solid minerals in the international markets. Thus, the economic relations with the outer society was minimised while those of the military wives associations were stalled owing to a lack of effective leadership.

With the coming of the Obasanjo regime, there was a policy shift as the Nation's Third Plan (1975-80) differed from the two previous ones because it focused on the nation's productivity and the creation of sound economic and social infrastructure (Nwankwo, 1986: 10-11). On 21 May 1979, Obasanjo launched the "Operation Feed the Nation" (OFN) in Dodan Barracks, Lagos and urged Colleges, Universities, and the Armed forces to grow part of their food, if not all (Ojiako, n.d. 160-161). Based on the assurances of government, the traditional authorities, community leaders, and well-meaning individuals began to release fallow lands to institutions and organisations to grow food crops. This initiative consequently changed the activities of military wives from compound gardens to farming. Female farming in the barracks activities became a catalyst that speeds up socio-economic relations between military wives and land speculators on the one hand, and military wives and traditional rulers at *Iba town, Ikorodu, Ipaja, and Badagry* areas of Lagos on the other (Nzemeka, 2016/2017: 90).

Between 1979 and 1990 much progress had been made by female farmers in the barracks due to the empowerment programme of NAOWA and BLRW initiated by Maryam Babangida, as well as the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985). With the leasing of land from traditional rulers in parts of Lagos, distance farming developed among military wives which contributed to economic specialisation, mono-cropping, mixed-cropping, livestock production and poultry system. The involvement of women in farming, trade and markets was to augment the income of the home, and the wages of military husbands. With their income, female farmers began to gain influence that helped them negotiate gender and power in the system. "Immediately some military-husbands understood that the income from women's produce was substantial; they began to assist them in the farms during off-duty (Nzemeka, 2015:340)." And since the earnings of this group were no longer hidden to their husbands, wife battering and divorce became minimised in Lagos barracks and other parts of the country. It was probably the achievements of these women that encouraged the military authorities to incorporate farming, poultry, livestock and other vocations in the curriculum of military retirees at the Nigerian Armed Forces Resettlement Centre, Oshodi, Lagos (NAECS, 1992:207).

Between 1987 and 1993, Maryam Babangida brought a turn-around in the economic fortune of military wives through the support of the BLRW and NAOWA. These outfits helped military wives obtain loans from the Peoples Banks plc which they distributed through the NAOWA Cooperatives. On account of these, seminars and workshops were organised for military wives on how to improve their economic production (AFR/185/A/Vol.1:1991). Also, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) introduced a National Diploma Programme for military wives and dependants which stimulated their interest in ceramic, pottery, pomade and detergent production. Others engaged in candle production, jewellery, basketry and cloth production, to mention but a few (see NAOWA/35/94, 1991). Additionally, the “Ministry of Defence Empowerment Scheme for Military Wives” also organised programmes for women in Lagos barracks which helped the majority develop flourishing outfits in modelling, hairdressing, beads and bag making, hat production, interior decoration, and event management, to mention but a few (Nzemeka, 2015: 316).

Secluded army wives also engaged in plaiting hair, spinning, embroidery, weaving, and processed food drinks, such as *kunnu*, *zobbo*, *yoghurt*, *pito*, *burukutu*, and *fura de nunu* (Nzemeka, 2018:65). These food drinks had their origins from military wives from Northern Nigeria who spread their food culture in Lagos and among the Yoruba women. It is, therefore, noted that for a typical gender project to succeed, it must specify that the beneficiaries of the project must be women and that women in the community participate and co-ordinate the planning and implementation of the project (Kevane, 2004: 160). Perhaps, this is the only way women would succeed in the face of inequality, culture and sex stereotypes.

Challenges of socio-economic relations in Lagos

The challenges of socio-economic relations in Lagos cannot be glossed over in a study of this nature. This is because the socio-economic relations of military wives were fraught with many challenges. These include a “peripheral society”, image and the overbearing attitude of some officers’ wives, postings of military husbands and retirements to mention but a few. For want of space, only a few will be discussed even though they are all important factors. Peripheral environment and a “closed society” were factors that impinge on the socio-economic relations of military wives. It is observed that the public did not know much about the activities of military wives except their immediate civilian neighbours. This development was heightened by the assumption that the military belonged only to the men, while the women engaged in reproduction. This perception contributed substantially to the marginalisation of military wives in government empowerment and social investment programmes.

Another factor that impacted the socio-economic relations of military wives in Lagos was the over-bearing attitude of some of the women. Literature indicates that the high-handedness of some army wives had been of great concern, particularly the impunity demonstrated in marketplaces and the public arena. This behaviour has been attributed to the prolonged military rule in the

country. Thus, the social distance in the relations between the public and military officers' wives

There was also the problem of frequent postings of military officers and men. This became a challenge because women were bound to accompany their husbands to new areas of posting which affected their productive activities and economic relations. For example, Alan Burns was transferred several times from Lagos to northern Nigeria and finally to Gold Coast. The same for Lt. Col. Larymore and Sharwood S. Smith who were posted many times from Lokoja to Bida and Keffi to Zungeru in the colonial years. This experience was common in CSand the post-colonial military. Therefore, military wives had to join their husbands in their new locations and probably have a fresh start. Similarly, there were shortages of arable land for agriculture in the 1980s and 90s following the construction of modern accommodation and construction of roads. Therefore, compound gardens, craft and industry initially carried out at undeveloped plots in the barracks had to stop. Added to this factor, was the indifference to the use of modern farm techniques, fertilizers, veterinary officers, and hired labour. It is clear from the above that women's empowerment is critical to national development, food security and food availability.

Conclusion

In this study, we have attempted to consider the socio-economic relations of military wives in Lagos. Women's socio-economic relations began in the distant past. In the war camps, women played a significant role in religious feasts, humanitarian activities, marriages, production, trade and markets. Warriors' wives and female camp followers contributed to community development, rebuilding of broken walls, provision of victuals and treatment of wounded soldiers as was the case in Egba and Ijaiye Wars. Through these activities, they connect with the larger society; established friendship, cooperation and collaboration. In economic relations, women earned income through agriculture, trade and markets which they used to support the war economy and their households.

In the colonial state, women joined their husbands in the barracks in 1905 and 1920 respectively. Since then the socio-economic relations of military wives have been profound and rewarding. They engaged in the cultivation of compound gardens and livestock production, through these activities they interface with the wider society. Trade and market were also veritable means through which the European and indigenous soldiers' wives obtain essential goods and services from their civilian neighbours. Women who left major imprints in the Lagos colony were Lady Violet Bourdillon, Sylvia Leith-Ross, Lady Sharwood Smith and others. For instance, Lady Bourdillon danced with the Lagos Market Women (LMW) and attended to widows whose husbands died in the Second World War. These women also supported the war effort between 1939 and 1945. They took up exceptional duties hitherto reserved for men but by share, determination created spaces of authority in the colony. Sylvia Leith-Ross was reputed to have contributed to the establishment of the Queens College, Lagos and also promoted the activities of the WCS which established

the Corona Schools in Lagos. Immediately after independence, army officers' wives established the AWA as an outlet for humanitarian and empowerment programmes in Lagos and Nigeria in general. The association later transformed into the NAOWA because its activities were not felt in public. With the transformation, they embarked on social and humanitarian activities which impacted society. Their contributions were also visible in the construction of markets, information and communication technology centres (ICT), construction of nursery and primary schools in all the barracks in Lagos which contributed to national development.

Given the above, this study demonstrated that military wives made tremendous contributions to the socio-economic relations of Lagos. It is also noted that their involvement in agriculture, trade and markets promoted intergroup relations and food security of Lagos. This paper established that by helping their military husbands to win the Nigerian Civil War and rule the nation for about three decades, the women have directly or indirectly contributed to nation-building, peace and unity of the state. It is therefore recommended that government needs to support the activities of military wives to enable them to engage further in national development.

Notes

1. AFR/185/A /Vol. 1 "NAOWA: Peoples Bank Loan to Soldiers' Wives" July 02, 1991.
2. NAOWA/35/94, "Request to Use Department of Occupational Therapy for Training of Soldiers' Wives on Soap Making." To: The Commandant, NAFRC, Oshodi, Lagos, dated June 16, 1991.
3. The Film, "Army Wives, Season 4" is based on the book, *Under the Sabers: The Unwritten Codes of Military Wives* by Tanya Biank. Created by Katherine Fulgate et-al, produced by Mark Gordon CO, and directed by Brian McNamara.
4. Report of Lord Hunt's Mission. (January 1970). "Nigeria: The Problem of Relief in the Aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War." Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by Command of Her Majesty, 3-15.

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