

Microfinancing as a Poverty Alleviation Measure:**A Gender Analysis****Adeolu B. Ayanwale and Taiwo Alimi***Department of Agricultural Economics, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria**E-mail: aayanwa@oauife.edu.ng***KEYWORDS** Microcredit; poverty alleviation; gender

ABSTRACT Available statistics confirm an increase in the incidence of poverty in the country in recent years. Furthermore, rural women are the most vulnerable groups to the poverty incidence. They are denied access to productive resources most especially credit. The Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) emerged in response to the inability of formal sources of finance to meet the need of the rural poor who constitute the bulk of the poor in the country. Farmers Development Union (FADU) as a microcredit NGO was studied to assess the extent to which it took care of the interest of the rural poor women in her microcredit administration. A random sample of 164 beneficiaries in Ibadan Oyo State was taken and analysed. Results revealed a conscious gender balancing in the administration of the facility because the random sample produced an almost equal number of male and female beneficiaries. Most of the facility was short time (less than a production season of 9 months), the monitoring and evaluation efforts of the NGO ensures a very high repayment rate, and more than 90 percent of the loan requests were granted. The savings mobilization efforts of the NGO yielded positively in that the beneficiaries saved an average amount (N27530) that was more than the average income of most members before joining the NGO. Although men have more of their loan request granted, women obtain more amount as loan on the average. The reported income obtained by men is more than that obtained by women, however, the income obtained by both is more than their income before joining the program. Furthermore, the average income obtained by the beneficiaries is more than the acknowledged threshold income of \$1.00 per day. In other words, the microcredit enabled the beneficiaries get out of the vicious cycle of poverty.