

# Analysis of Women Participation in Rural Community Development Projects in Isu Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>I. E. Nwosu; <sup>2</sup>N. U. Inyang & <sup>3</sup>I. M. Dike

<sup>1&2</sup>Department of Rural Sociology and Extension, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike

<sup>3</sup>Department of Agric. Economics and extension, Abia State University, Uturu, Abia State

Email: nwosu.iheanye@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: I. E. Nwosu

## ABSTRACT

The study was carried out in Isu Local Government Area of Imo State, primarily to assess women's participation in rural community development projects. One hundred and twenty respondents were selected through a multistage sampling technique. A structured questionnaire duly pre-tested and validated was used to elicit information from the respondents. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as means, frequency, percentages, mean scores, and probit regression analysis as an inferential statistical tool. The study identified the rural community projects carried out by women, ascertained the level of women's participation in rural community development projects, determined the factors that influenced women's participation in rural community development and also identified the problems affecting women's participation in rural community development in the study area. The result showed that a high percentage, (60.83%) of the rural development projects embarked on by women was mainly in the area of water supply while 3.33% of the projects embarked on by the women were in the area of road maintenance and construction. The result further revealed that there was high level of women's participation at the planning stage of the rural development projects with a grand mean score of 3.36. Further, the result also showed that ineffective leadership was the greatest problem to effective participation of women in rural community development projects. The probit regression estimates of the determinants of women's participation in rural development projects showed that, the coefficients of age, education and primary occupation were significant at 10.0%, 5.0% and 1.0% respectively. From the result findings, it was recommended, among others, that appropriate machinery should be set up for more effective enlightenment of the rural women on the need to get involved in rural community development projects. Similarly, appropriate leadership training programmes should be organized for the rural women for more enhanced knowledge towards mobilizing, directing, coordinating and motivating the rank and file of the women towards higher participation in rural community development projects.

**Keywords:** Analysis, Women Participation, Rural community Development, Projects, Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of community development is not new in Nigeria and may be traced to antiquity (Onwuka, 2008). Historically, in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular, community development, often referred to as self-help development, had remained one important process of ensuring development in rural communities. The 1962 Rio de Janeiro International Conference on Social Work (in Ekong, 2010) referred to community development as the conscious and deliberate effort aimed at helping communities recognize their needs and to assume increasing responsibilities for solving their problems thereby increasing their capacities to participate fully in life of the nation. Similarly, Chukwuezi (2000) explained that community development could be seen as a method whereby the efforts of the community are channeled with the outside body to improve the living condition of the people thereby encouraging development of various human potential within the community.

Generally, community development is a process of self-help whereby the people themselves identify their needs or problems and work towards mobilizing appropriate resources from within or through external support towards satisfying the needs or providing solutions to the problems. It is voluntary and participatory in nature and based on the people's felt needs. It is also democratic in nature and bottom-up in approach. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, community development was one of the most important ways of improving the various village communities through mass participation of the people and the age grades, the village council, women groups, titled societies, native doctors, confraternity, etc. help in articulating varying forms of development (Chukwuezi, 2000).

Women, especially in the developing nations such as Nigeria, have played significant roles in the sustainable agricultural and rural development of their countries (Akpabio 2005; Obasi, 2005; Ani, A.O., 2004; Ekong, 2010). Over the years, the women in Igbo land have been actively involved in rural community development, including women in the study area. Despite their significant contributions to the socio-economic development of their countries, however, these women still face several socio-cultural and economic challenges that limit their visibility in the society generally and participation in the decision-making process in particular. Kobane (2013) asserts that traditional and cultural norms are the major challenges that limit the access of women in rural development thereby leading to their invisibility in rural development. It is against this background that the study assessed the level of participation of women in rural community development in Isu Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives were to:

- i. Describe the socio-economic characteristics of women involved in rural community development projects in Isu LGA.

- ii. Identify rural community development projects carried out by women in the study area.
- iii. Ascertain the level of women's participation in rural community development projects in the study area.
- iv. Determine the factors that influence women participation in rural community development in the study area.
- v. Identify problems affecting women participation in rural community development projects in the study area.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Isu Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. The Local Government Area is made up of thirteen autonomous communities and was created in 1981, with head quarters in a town called Amandugba Isu Local Government lies between latitude  $5^{\circ}41' N$  and  $5^{\circ} 6' N$  and longitude  $7^{\circ} 48'E$  and  $7^{\circ} 06'E$  with a population of 164, 38 people and a land area of about 989.38 square kilometer (NPC, 2006). The local government is bounded on the East by Nkwerre Local Government Area and on the West by Mbaitolu Local Government Area. Isu Local Government Area falls within the tropical rainforest belt. Essentially, the study aimed at assessing the level of participation of women in rural community projects in the study area. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select 120 respondents for the study. The first stage involved the selection of ten autonomous communities. The second stage involved the random selection of two villages, each from the ten autonomous communities, and the third stage involved a random selection of six women each from the twenty villages. Data was sourced from both primary and secondary sources. A set of well-structured questionnaire was used to collect data on age, educational level, marital status, household size, among other variables.

Analytical tools employed in the study included; descriptive statistics involving means, percentages, frequency tables, mean score analysis as well as the probit regression model. The probit regression model is stated as follows according to (Nwaobiala and Ezeh, 2012).

$$Y_i^* = B'X_i + E_i$$

$$Y_i^* = 0 \text{ if } Y^i = 0$$

$$Y_i^* = 1 \text{ if } Y^i = 1$$

Where

$Y_i^*$  = an underlying latent variable that indexes the level of women participation

$Y^i$  = women in rural development (participation = 1, no participation = 0)

$B'$  = a vector of estimated parameters

$E$  = the error term

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to socio-economic characteristics**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age (years)</b>	22	18.35
21 – 30	32	26.67
31 – 40	28	23.33
41 – 50	16	13.33
51 – 60	22	18.33
60 and above	120	100.00
Total	40.4	
Mean		
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	18	15.0
Married	92	76.7
Widowed	7	5.8
Divorced	3	2.5
Total	120	100.00
<b>Educational level</b>		
No formal education	20	16.7
Primary education	23	19.1
Secondary education	18	15.0
Tertiary education	18	15.0
Total	120	100.00
<b>Household size</b>		
1 – 4	36	30.0
5 – 9	54	45.0
10 – 12	30	25.0
<b>Occupational status</b>		
Farming	52	43.3
Trading	19	15.8
Teaching	25	20.8
Civil Servant/Private sector	17	14.2
Contract worker	5	4.2
Retired	1	0.8
Others	1	0.8
Total	120	100.00
<b>Income group</b>		
Low (Below N50,000)	30	25.00
Medium (50,000 – 100,000)	61	50.83
High (Above 101,000)	29	24.17
Total	120	100.00
Mean	N89,479.41	

**Source:** Field survey data, 2013

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the analysis on age as shown in table 1 indicated that the mean age of the women who participated in the rural community development project was 40.4 years. The findings showed that majority of the women were in their productive ages, where their energies could be harnessed and utilized for productive ventures in

rural community development. This is in line with the observations of Ekong (2010) who stated that it is more likely for younger women to participate in community development activities than the older ones. The result further revealed that 76.7% of the respondents were married, 15.0% were single, 5.8% were widowed and 2.5% of the respondents were divorced. This implies that majority of the women, that is, the married women, had high sense of responsibility towards the development of their rural communities through participation in the rural development projects. This corroborates the view of Akpabio (2008), who stated that married women with older children may be relieved of some filial responsibilities and may therefore be able to devote more time to the activities involved in rural development projects. Moreover, there was high literacy rate among the respondents. The results showed that 83.3% of the respondents had one form of education or the other ranging from primary to tertiary education. This is in line with Asiabaka (1990) who reported that education is major determinant of effective participation in community development projects.

The result in Table 1 further indicated that 45% of the respondents had household size of between 5-9 persons, 30% had household size of between 1-4, while 25% of the respondents had household size of between 12 persons. The implication here is that women with large household size will always like to participate in community development projects, so as to improve the economic future of their families. Furthermore, the distribution of the respondents by occupational status as shown in Table 1 revealed that majority of the respondents (43.3%) were farmers. This implies that households who take farming as their primary occupation engaged more in rural development projects. But this is contrary to the opinions of Fidrmuc and Gerxhani (2004) who said that a person employed in the formal sector has a strong incentive to participate in rural development projects. The study also revealed three categories of income, whereby majority (50.83%) of the respondents fall into the medium category of annual income group and 25% fell into the low income group and then 24.17% of the respondents belonged to the high category of income group. The mean annual income of the respondents was N89, 479.41. The implication of this is that since majority of the women fell in the moderate income group category, they have the ability to make cash contributions to the rural development projects.

Data on Table 2 shows the types of rural community development projects embarked upon by the women in Isu Local Government Area of Imo State. The table shows that majority (68.83%) of the rural community development projects embarked upon by the women was the water supply project. The implication here is the importance attached to water as "water is life" especially in the rural areas. This was followed by skills acquisition projects (54.17%), Health centre projects (50.83%), and school building projects (49.17%). These projects represented the felt needs of the rural women. Other project included rural electrification (42.5%), vocational

training (40%), jetties and shore protection (38.33%), educational support (36.67%), public building and utility maintenance scheme (35.83%), land recreational/dredging (34.17%), and community based surveillance scheme (33.33%). The result also revealed lower percentages of projects executed by women such as transportation and communication (12.5%), road maintenance construction projects (3.33%). This may be attributed to the capital intensive nature of these kind of projects.

**Table 2: Types of rural community development projects embarked on by women in Isu LGA, Imo State, Nigeria**

Rural community development projects	Frequency	Percentage
School Building	59	49.17
Health Centre	61	50.83
Water Supply	73	60.83
Rural Electrification	51	42.50
Road Maintenance and Construction	4	3.33
Jetties And Shore Protection	46	38.33
Land Reclamation/Dredging	41	34.17
Skills Acquisition and Computer Training	65	54.17
Transportation and Communication	15	12.50
Education Support	44	36.67
Vocational Training	48	40.00
Public Building and utility maintenance Scheme	43	35.83
Community Based surveillance Scheme	40	33.33

**Sources:** Field survey data, 2013.

\*multiple responses recorded.

The result on table 3 shows the level of women participation on each sub component of the rural development projects. The result showed that in the planning stage of the rural development projects, the grand mean score was 3.36. This was greater than the bench mark of 3.0. This implies that the rural women actively participated in the planning and preparatory stage of the rural community development project since it was their project. On the implementation stage, the grand mean score was 3.73, far higher than the bench mark score of 3.0 implying a very high level of active participation of these women in the implementation stage of these projects in the study area. Finally, the result on the evaluation stage indicates a grand mean of 3.15. Since the grand mean was above 3.0 which was the benchmark for participation, the result shows that the women fully participated in the process of evaluation of their projects.

**Table 3: Distribution of rural women according to their level of participation in rural community development projects in Isu Local Government Area of Imo State**

Stages of participation	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Never	TPRS	Mean
<b>1. PLANNING</b>							
Participation by contributing views and ideas	110 (12.2)	128 (26.6)	126 (35.0)	32 (13.3)	8 (6.6)	40	3.36
Participate in identification of needs and problems along with officials	115 (19.2)	208 (43.3)	57 (15.8)	42 (17.5)	5 (4.2)	42	3.56
Participate in analyzing and evaluating various alternatives for solving problems	25 (4.2)	80 (16.7)	171 (47.5)	26 (10.8)	25 (20.8)	327	2.75
Participate in formulating various agricultural and rural development projects proposal for the community	145 (24.2)	128 (26.7)	111 (30.8)	42 (17.5)	2 (5.0)	428	3.57
Participate in selection of beneficiaries for each project	70 (11.6)	288 (60)	30 (8.3)	26 (10.8)	11 (9.2)	425	3.36
<b>GRAND MEAN</b>						<b>402.2</b>	<b>3.36</b>
<b>2. IMPLEMENTATION</b>							
Participation in implementing the scheme selected for the community	185 (30.8)	192 (40)	48 (13.3)	10 (4.2)	14 (11.7)	449	3.74
Participate in arranging the experts necessary for the scheme	260 (43.3)	92 (19.1)	63 (17.5)	38 (15.8)	5 (4.25)	458	3.82
Participate in organizing people to carry out the activities	210 (35.0)	128 (26.7)	66 (18.3)	16 (13.3)	16 (13.3)	436	3.63
<b>GRAND MEAN</b>						<b>447</b>	<b>3.73</b>
<b>3. EVALUATION</b>							
Participation in evaluation by providing feedback information	135 (22.5)	228 (47.5)	72 (20.0)	30 (12.5)	0	465	3.88
Participate in suggesting suitable alternative methods and plans by sharing experiences	10 (1.66)	88 (18.33)	105 (29.16)	64 (26.6)	29 (24.2)	296	2.47
Participate in evaluating the results of the activities	210 (35.0)	68 (14.1)	15 (4.2)	44 (18.3)	34 (28.3)	371	3.09
<b>GRAND MEAN</b>						<b>377.3</b>	<b>3.15</b>

**Source:** Field Survey Data, 2013.

**Decision Rule:** 3.0 and above = participations

**Below 3.0 = non-participation**

Figures in parenthesis are percentages

TPRS: Total Participation Raw Score

Table 4 shows the problems to effective participation of rural women in rural community development projects. The result shows that 62.2% of the respondents indicated ineffective leadership as the greatest problem to effective

participation of rural women in rural development projects while 60.83% and 55.8% also indicated poor/inadequate enlightenment and lack of finance respectively as problems to effective participation of women rural community development. Other problems as indicated by the result from the study included religious belief and practice (40.8%), inability to link with donor agency (40.8%), poor education (30.8%), culture and tradition (27.5%) etc.

**Table 4: Problems of women participation in rural community development projects**

Problems	Frequency*	Percentage
Poor/inadequate Enlightenment	73	60.83
Inefficient leadership	75	62.50
lack of finance	67	55.80
Ineffective mobilization	24	20.00
Lack of unity	21	17.50
Unfavourable Government policies	10	8.30
culture and tradition	0	27.50
Poor education	37	30.80
Religious belief and practice	40	40.80
Timing of the project	7	5.80
Inability to link with donor agencies	40	40.8

**Source:** Field survey data. 2013

\*Multiple responses recorded

The results in Table 5 show the Probit regression model estimates of the determinants of women participation in rural community development projects in Isu Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.

The Chi<sup>2</sup> was significant at 1.0% level of probability with a pseudo R<sup>2</sup> of 35.07% indicating goodness of fit.

The coefficient of age (-0.1776) was negatively and significant at 10% level of probability. This implies that as the women advanced in age, their participation level in the activities of rural community development project decreases.

The coefficient for education level (0.7272) was positively signed and significant at 5.0% level of probability. This implies any increase in the level of education of the women will lead to an increase in the level of participation of women in rural community development projects. This finding is in agreement with a *priori* expectation.



The coefficient of primary occupation (-1.1532) was negatively signed and highly significant at 1.0% level of probability. This implies that being a farmer decreases the level of women participating in the rural community development projects. This result is contrary to *a priori* expectation and may be attributed to the fact that majority of the women in the study area are full time farmers who depend entirely on farming activities for survival and generation of income. This result is in consonance with the work of Fidrmuc and Gerxhani (2004) who asserted that a person in formal employment (white collar jobs) has a strong incentive to participate in social groups and rural community development, partly on account of the trust he she tends to develop towards the society.

**Table 5: Probit Regression Model estimates of the determinants of women participation in rural community development projects**

Variables	Estimated Coefficient	Standard error	Z - ratios	P > z
Constant	-0.2197691	0.7215535	-0.30	0.761
Sex	-1.135977	0.8128819	-1.40	0.0162
Age	-0.1775781	0.1015064	-1.75*	0.080
Marital Status	-0.4385772	0.476609	0.92	0.357
Household size	0-0.2282592	0.3156914	0.92	0.470
Educational level	-0.7271758	0.0668971	2.38**	0.513
Membership of village Association	8.528905	3.367897	2.38	0.011
Primary Occupation	-1.153158	0.3373423	-3.42***	0.001
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>			0.3507	
Log likelihood			-13.100666	
Chi <sup>2</sup> (10)			125.77***	

Source: Field Survey data. 2013.

## CONCLUSION

The result findings of the study showed that women's participation in rural community development projects is one functional process for effective mobilization of rural households for the overall development of the rural area. The result also indicated high literacy level among rural women and this promotes and contributes effectively to women's participation in rural community development efforts. From the results obtained, the following recommendations were made:

1. Appropriate machinery should be set up for more effective sensitization/enlightenment of the rural women on the need to get involved in rural community development projects.
2. Appropriate leadership training programme should be organized for the rural women for purpose of effectively mobilizing, coordinating directing and motivating the rank and file of the women towards

achieving rural community development projects.

3. Adult education programme should be organized for the women in the study area, with a view to improving their literacy level.

4. The government, particularly the state and local governments should support the rural women financially towards their community development projects.

5. Importantly, too, the rural women should be linked to appropriate donor agencies by well informed persons or authorities for support in their community development efforts.

## REFERENCES

- Akpabio, I.A.(2005). Human Agriculture: Social Themes In Agricultural Development, Published by Abaam Publishing Co, Uyo, Nigeria.
- Akpabio, I. A.(2005). "Women and Agriculture Development". *Published in Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology*. Nwachukwu and Onwuekwusi (ed)Snaap Press Ltd, Enugu, Nigeria.
- Ani, A.O. (2004). *Women In Agriculture and Rural Development*. Published by Quilla, Maiduguri, Niigeria.
- Chukwuezi, B. (2000). *Issues In Community Development*, Mike Social Press, Nsukka, Nigeria
- Ekong. E. E. (2010). *Introduction to Rural Sociology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Dove Educational Publishers Uyo, Nigeria
- Kobane.N. (2013). Being Short (hanged: Women and Access to Land in Patriarchal Society.
- Nwaobiala, I. and Ezeh. CM. (2012). "Farmers' Perception of Simple Mechanized Farm Implements used in Crop Production in Abia State. Nigeria". In *Journal of Agricultural Science* 7(3): 159-163.
- Obasi, O.O (2005). "Women In Rural Development: The Nigerian Experience" In Nwachukwu, I and Onwuekwusi, G.C (Eds). *Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology*, Snaap Press Ltd, Enugu, Nigeria.
- Onwuka, P.C (2008). *Community and Rural Development In Nigeria: An Historical Discourse*, Elite Publications, Owerri, Nigeria.