

## **AN ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPATION OF RURAL WOMEN IN COMMUNITY BASED DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES (CBDAs) IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Sustainable development of a nation denotes ability to maintain certain level of development by all stakeholders. This study therefore assesses the participation of rural women in Community-Based Development Activities (CBDAs) in the study area. One hundred and twenty-five rural women were interviewed using structured interview schedule. Data were described using frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation while inferential statistics such as chi square were used to draw inference. There were positive and significant association between level of respondents' participation in CBDAs and their age ( $\chi^2= 29.04$ ;  $\rho \leq 0.05$ ); years of formal education ( $\chi^2= 46.09$ ;  $\rho \leq 0.05$ ); occupation ( $\chi^2= 40.45$ ;  $\rho \leq 0.05$ ); marital status ( $\chi^2= 36.51$ ;  $\rho \leq 0.05$ ); membership of social group ( $\chi^2= 17.71$ ;  $\rho \leq 0.05$ ). It was concluded that participation of rural woman in CBDAs is an essential issue to avoid waste of vast human resources embedded in them.

**Keywords:** sustainable, assessment, participation, community-based, development, rural women

## **INTRODUCTION**

Achieving Sustainable Development in developing countries like Nigeria where more than 60% of its inhabitants live in rural areas call for a participatory approach by all stakeholders who are involved in development activities. The concept of sustainable development recognizes that natural resources have the best chances of being preserved through wise use of their developmental potential (Adams 1995). Natural resources are treated as production factors, which need to be used and maintained just like labour and man-made capital. The objective is to improve people's welfare, but not at the expense of future generations. Exploitation of resources, investment patterns, technological development and institutional change must all incorporate environmental concerns and balance resource use and preservation. Sustainable development encourages optima resource utilization that is, resource use with the highest sustainable yield for a defined population. One of the major characteristic of sustainable development is participatory in approach. People are considered part of the problem and solution. Therefore, local knowledge should be tapped and through participation, the ground should be prepared for policies and activities which address genuine needs and can be implemented. As a result, enforcement problems would decrease. However, sustainability of such all embracing and all encompassing development requires co-operation and participation of all stakeholders. This can be achieved through effective participation in all community-based development activities which is a by-products of human resources management practice.

The practice of community development is not new in Nigerian society. Ever before the advent of the colonial administration, various communities in Nigeria have employed communal efforts as the mechanism for mobilizing community resources and for providing physical improvement and functional facilities in their given localities to further their social, political and economic interest. People have come to realize that government resources are limited and that no government however benevolent can provide all the needs of her citizenry particularly in the third world countries such as Nigeria. Thus, this knowledge had brought the idea of community development through self-help project(s) as a way to supplement government's effort to provide the basic needs of the people.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Rural Sociologist and Environmentalists have maintained that the solution to the range of environmental problems identified in Nigeria is the adoption of a principle of sustainable exploitation and use of resources in the natural environment. It was the World Conservation Strategy of 1980 that launched sustainable development into the international policy arena by stressing the integration of environmental protection and conservation values into the development process. In 1987 the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED) chaired by Norway's Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland came out with the concept of sustainable development. It was defined as "economic and social development that meets the needs of the current generations without endangering the ability of finite generations satisfying their needs and choosing their lifestyle.

According to Okoji (1990) and Baba (2002) sustainable living therefore calls for the conservation of finite resources through direct reduction of amounts used, more efficient use and seeking alternatives. It also entails reducing waste through recycling and minimization. Finally it calls for global population control to reduce the sheer pressure and demand on resources. Because of the interrelatedness of the world's ecosystem, sustainability could only be attained through global agreement and co-operation. Hence, there was 1<sup>st</sup> Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 and the second one in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002 to evaluate the progress made by nations in the implementation of "Agenda 21" adopted in Rio 1992.

Nigeria's attention to environment issues was triggered in 1987 when a certain European Industrial concern decided to ship and secretly dumps tons of toxic waste in the small Niger Delta town of Koko. The government of the day responded among other things, by setting up a Federal environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) with the mandate to protect, restore and preserve the ecosystems of the Nigeria environment. This initiative coincided with the publication of the Bruntland Commission Report – **Our Common Future**, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Earth Summit, which Nigeria attended and was one of the signatories to the various global agreements on sustainability.

The governments in Nigeria (Federal, State and Local) have since taken concrete steps such as Tree Planting Campaigns, Environmental Sanitation Day observances, promulgation of a Decree on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Investment in urban waste disposal and managements, establishment of a whole Federal Ministry for Environment and signing the Global Wetlands Treaty. In 1989, the Energy Commission of Nigeria (ECN) was set up to co-ordinate and monitor activities in the energy sector – particularly to encourage the diversification and use of the various alternative sources of energy available in Nigeria. FEPA in 1999 published Nigeria's National Agenda 21 as a step in the direction to implementing the global blueprint that would enable Nigeria integrate environment and the private sector. It identified 18 major areas ranging from poverty alleviation, afforestation protecting marine and social resources. For each area, it spells out a mission statement or national long-term (15 years) target; the lead-coordinating agency and participating agencies/department/institutions responsible for execution. It is expected that as these lofty programmes are executed, Nigeria would entrench the concept of sustainability into its national psyche.

Globally there is a growing consensus that sustainable development means achieving a quality of that can be maintained for many generations because it is.

- (a) Socially desirable – fulfilling peoples' cultural, material and spiritual needs in equitable ways.
- (b) Economically viable – pays for itself, with costs not exceeding income.
- (c) Economically sustainable – maintaining the long – term viability of supporting ecosystems.

There is also the realization that achieving sustainable development entails trades off between potentially opposing goals such as economic growth and resources conservation, or between modern technology and indigenous practices.

It also entails bargaining between different stakeholders or interest groups holding inevitably different but legitimate view on environment and development. Meanwhile achieving sustainability of a national development is a function of how well and efficient the human resource at all levels of economy is being managed. For sustainable development, there is a need for equitable reward system that could grantee fair play and organizational justice at the community level. Management of other resources such as money, time and energy as well as materials is a function of human resource. It is expected that as nations elaborate on Agenda 21 and implement these, the world's ecological systems and resources would be maintained for future generations.

Community development as defined by Jibowo (2000) and Ekong (2010) is a process of utilizing the people to develop themselves through self-initiative and motivation with minimum assistance from government. It stands for a conscious and deliberate attempt aimed at helping communities to recognize their needs and to assume increasing responsibility for solving their problems; thereby increasing their capacities to participate fully in the life of a nation.

According to the constitutional reform of 1976, Local Government was recognized as the third tier of government in Nigeria, and statutorily required to perform the role of agents of grassroots development, each Local Government Area (LGA) in all the State (Osun inclusive) has a section attached to the Administration and General Services Department which oversees community development and social welfare. This section is headed by a Community Development Inspector (CDI). The community development department is under the general supervision of the secretary to the local government. The department implements government directives as approved by the local government in respect to community development and social welfare. It kindles the interest and motivates members of the local communities to undertake self-help and social development projects.

In Africa, women constitute about 50 percent of the population. it has been observed that the roles of women in development have been either ignored or under emphasized because women are considered in most communities as second class citizens, traditional (cultural) beliefs regarding the role and status of women as homemaker in society are still prevalent and many women who are part of this system are finding it difficult to dislocate from this culture lest they be ostracize leading to confining women's identity to the domestic sphere.

Although government at national level has formulated policies in boosting the participation of women in community development like introducing the Better Life Programme (BLP) in 1987 to improve the conditions of the rural women, Family Support Program (FSP) in 1989 to improve the fortune of the family and the condition of women in general and Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in 1994. Women participation in community development in rural is still a far cry. This means that the neglect of women folk in the development process of any community constitutes a human resource waste. In this premise, it will be a disservice for any community to ignore its women population in its development efforts. Hence, the need to assess the participation of rural women in CBDAs in Osun State.

The main objective of the study was to assess the participation of rural women in CBDAs in Osun State. The specific objectives were to

- i. describe the demographic characteristics of the rural women in Osun State.
- ii. examine the participation of rural women at various stages of CBDAs in the study area.
- iii. identify the challenges militating against participation of rural women in CBDAs in the study area.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

There is no significant relationship between selected demographic characteristics of the rural women and their level participation in CBDAs.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Osun State, one of the states in Southwestern Nigeria. Multi stage sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. At first stage, LGA with highest population of women were purposively selected from each of the senatorial districts based on report of National Population Census (NPC, 1991). The selected LGAs were Ayedaade, Ife-North and Odo-Otin. Fifty percent of rural community development associations were proportionally selected from each of the LGA. Finally, fifty percent of the women in each of the selected rural community development associations were selected. In all, 125 rural women were interviewed for the study. Duly validated and pretested structural interview schedule were used to elicit information from the respondents. Data were summarized with percentages, means and standard deviation, while Chi-square was employed to make inferences from the hypothesis.

## **MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES**

*Dependent variable:* The dependent variable for this study was conceptualized as level of participation of rural women in CBDAs. It was measured by listing and scoring the natures of participation of rural women at each stages of CBDAs (Problem identification, Decision-making, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation stage) against a 4-rating scale of Very often (4), Often (3), Occasionally (2), Never (1).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Result in Table 1 revealed that the average age of rural women participating in CBDAs was 47.9 with standard deviation of 9.0. This implied that the many (68.0%) of the respondents were middle aged and active, this could enabled them to participate actively in CBDAs. Vast majority (80.0%) of them were married. Majority of the women interviewed were literate as the average years spent in formal schooling was 12.9 with standard deviation of 1.3, this could helped in their understanding of importance of community development activities and could enhance their participation. Majority (75.2%) of

the women interviewed were Yoruba with very few as Igbo and Igede. It was observed that vast majority of the respondents engaged in more than one occupation as means of livelihood. This implies that majority had a steady source of income and therefore enhances their participation in CBDAs in contribution of funds. Furthermore, majority of them were members of one or more social groups.

**Table 1: Distribution of rural women by selected personal characteristics** n= 125

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
<b>Age (years)</b>				
<30	28	22.4		
30-50	85	68.0	47.9	9.0
>50	11	9.6		
<b>Marital status</b>				
Single	14	11.2		
Married	100	80.0		
Divorced	4	3.2		
Widowed	4	3.2		
Separated	3	2.4		
<b>Years of formal education</b>				
0	8	6.4		
1-6	48	38.4	12.9	1.3
7-12	29	23.2		
>13	40	32.0		
<b>*Occupation</b>				
Artisan	50	40.0		
Civil service	78	62.4		
Farming	83	66.4		
Trading	90	72.0		
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Yoruba	94	75.2		
Igbo	11	8.8		
Igede	20	16.0		
<b>Membership of social group</b>				
Yes	98	78.4		
No	27	21.6		

**Source:** Field survey, 2012      \* Multiple responses

Results in Table 2 revealed that vast majority of the rural women interviewed participated in more than one CBDAs in the past five years. In addition, the data implies that majority of the women were involved in brain work and activities that are not strength consuming like sweeping of market, skill acquisition, awareness about HIV/AIDS and youth association. These findings corroborated that of Reuters foundation (2006) and Fardaus (2006) which stated that rural women deployed resources for their community development activities in Nigeria and that of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1998) which stated that participation makes it possible for rural poor to unleash their untapped creative potentials for their immediate community development. It also corroborates the findings of Akinbile and Ikwuakwam (2004) who reported that the participation of rural women in community development projected as contributed in no small measure to the successes recorded in development projects in Olu Local Government in Imo State of Nigeria.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by CBDAs participated in, in the last five years. n=125**

* Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Construction of convents	45	36.0
Clearing of foot path	37	29.6
Sweeping of market	67	53.6
Coordinating educational programme	50	40.0
Electrification	60	48.0
Construction of building	34	27.3
Women skill acquisition	60	48.0
Awareness on HIV/AIDS	90	72.0
Youth association	75	60.0

**Source:** Field survey, 2012      \* Multiple responses

Result in Table 3 revealed that the participation of rural women in CBDAs ranges from passive participation where people provide information for self-mobilization and participation where people take initiatives independent of external institutions. This finding was in agreement with that of Okunade *et al* (2005) who reported that the rural women participated at every stage of CBDAs at different levels from problem identification, decision-making, planning for action, implementation and evaluation/monitoring stage. The finding also corroborate that of Deji (2007) who reported that the participation of women is inevitably significant to the success and sustainability of rural development projects and that the level of their participation determines the extent to which the project succeeds.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to level of participation in community-based development activities.  
n= 125**

<b>*Level of participation</b>	<b>VO</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>OC</b>	<b>N</b>
	<b>F(%)</b>	<b>F(%)</b>	<b>F(%)</b>	<b>F(%)</b>
<b>Problem identification</b>				
Initiator	51(40.8)	68(54.4)	18(14.4)	7(5.6)
Opinion giver	22(17.6)	59(47.2)	25(20.0)	44(35.2)
Information seeker	47(37.6)	63(50.4)	29(23.2)	11(8.8)
Information giver	68(54.4)	39(31.2)	29(23.2)	14(11.2)
<b>Decision-making</b>				
Attending meeting	69(55.2)	69(55.2)	12(9.6)	-
Committee member	84(67.2)	66(52.8)	-	-
Debate and discussion	34(27.2)	97(77.6)	11(8.8)	8(6.4)
Conducting opinion poll	32(25.6)	64(51.2)	47(37.6)	7(5.6)
<b>Planning of action</b>				
Arranging meetings	60(48.0)	77(61.6)	13(10.4)	-
Source of input	84(67.2)	53(42.4)	13(10.4)	-
Work organization framework	55(44.0)	95(76.0)	-	-
<b>Implementation</b>				
Fund	97(77.6)	53(42.4)	-	-
Equipment/materials	77(61.6)	73(58.4)	-	-
Personal labour	48(38.4)	80(64.0)	15(12.0)	7(5.6)
Hired labour	37(29.6)	68(54.4)	38(30.4)	7(5.6)
<b>Evaluation/monitoring</b>				
Beginning	-	31(24.8)	64(51.2)	55(44.0)
Middle	-	18(14.4)	47(37.6)	85(68.0)
End	72(57.6)	7(5.6)	71(56.8)	-

**Source:** Field survey, 2012 \* Multiple responses VO= Very Often OF= Often  
OC= Occasionally N= Never

Result in Table 4 revealed that vast majority (88.8%) of the respondents agreed to gender discrimination as a main challenge encountered in their participation in CBDAs which ranked highest, while beliefs of the respondents (20.8%) ranked least among the challenges encountered by the respondents in participating in CBDAs. This finding corroborated that of Deji (2007) who reported that there are socio-cultural factor associated with participation of rural women in community development projects in Nigeria.



**Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to challenges encountered during participation in CBDAs. n=125**

<b>*Challenges</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Gender discrimination	111	88.8	1 <sup>st</sup>
Inadequate education	47	37.6	12 <sup>th</sup>
Low level of government assistance	107	85.6	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Inadequate resources	67	53.6	7 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of communal cooperation	54	43.2	9 <sup>th</sup>
Insufficient of information about project	48	38.4	11 <sup>th</sup>
Insufficient of skill to participate	91	72.8	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Insufficient of time	38	30.4	13 <sup>th</sup>
Not satisfied with project management	81	64.8	6 <sup>th</sup>
Mismanagement of project fund	63	50.4	8 <sup>th</sup>
Improper project coordination/supervision	51	40.8	10 <sup>th</sup>
Inadequate planning	88	70.4	5 <sup>th</sup>
My belief	26	20.8	14 <sup>th</sup>
Cultural beliefs about women roles	91	72.8	3 <sup>rd</sup>

**Source:** Field survey, 2012      \* Multiple responses

The results in Table 6 show that at 0.05 level of significant, there was no significant association between ethnicity ( $\chi^2=6.83$ ) of the respondents and their level of participation in CBDAs. This implies that level of participation in CBDAs of rural women was not a function of nativity. That is, irrespective of where one was born and tribe's affiliation, level of participation among all the respondents was not different. On the other hand, all other variables, that is, age ( $\chi^2=29.04$ ), years of formal education ( $\chi^2=46.09$ ) marital status ( $\chi^2=36.51$ ), membership of social group ( $\chi^2=17.71$ ), and occupation ( $\chi^2=40.45$ ) were significantly associated with level of participation of rural woman in CBDAs.

**Table 5: Results of Chi-Square analysis of the relationship between socio economic characteristics of respondents and level of their participation in CBDAs**

Variables	$\chi^2$ - value	DF	P-Value	Decision
Age	29.04	14	0.749*	S
Years of formal education	46.09	18	0.530*	S
Occupation	40.45	28	0.647*	S
Marital status	36.51	28	0.432*	S
Ethnicity	6.83	28	0.009	NS
Membership of social group	17.71	19	0.508*	S

**Source:** Field survey, 2012    S=Significant    NS=Non Significant

\*Significant at P<0.05    DF= Degree of Freedom

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has established the relevance of rural women as a stakeholder in community-based development activities as a way of attaining and sustaining national development. Achieving sustainability at thegrassroot level call for active participation of women in all aspects of planning, decision making and execution of community-based project(s.) However, certain variables like age, years of formal education, occupation, marital status and membership of social organization were identified as correlates to women participation to achieving sustainable development at the grassroots. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that participation of rural woman in CBDAs was an essential issue to avoid waste of vast human resources embedded in them. In order to maximize the potential inherent in women participation in community developmental effort, it was recommended that all the challenges faced by rural women when participating in CBDAs should be adequately addressed through capacity building and empowerment

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