



## Extent of Rural Women's Participation in Community Development Projects in Iddo Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study examined extent of rural women participation in four community development projects in Ido local government area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Three hundred and ten rural women were selected from 10 political wards in Ido Local Government area of the State and data were collected through informal interview guide. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean while chi-square was used to determine the relationship between women's socio-economic characteristics and extent of participation in community development project (CDP). Scores were also assigned for participation of women and this was categorized as high, average, low and no participation. Findings from the study show that women participated at different levels of the project but the overall participation was low. Chi-square result shows that occupation, income and marital status were significant to participation in CDP (at 0.05 level of significance). It is therefore recommended that government should improve the occupational

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condition and educational status of women so as to achieve rapid rural development and enhance women's condition to local economy, household livelihood and improve standard of living.

*Keywords: Extent of participation; rural women; community development project.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Discourse and practice of development programs on women's participation in development have been a dynamic process influenced by intersections of development and feminist theories in the last three decades. Before the United Nations Decade for Women (1976 – 1985), it was assumed that both men and women benefit equally from development projects, but most of the time these projects were gender biased. The United Nations Development Program [1] asserted that development, if not engendered is endangered; therefore, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment has been an integral part of the development objectives for many development agencies. Even for development projects that do not directly aim at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, people started to recognize women's participation and implement special activities for women [2].

Ester Boserup's book on women's role in economic development in 1970 [3] was a first bold step in raising voice for women's role in development. Her efforts and that of other international advocates have raised awareness of gender issues in the development field. It is argued that women have the right to participate in projects which profoundly affect their lives, that their participation can make the difference between success or failure of these projects, and that participation gives confidence to marginalized groups previously voiceless in the community [4].

Women are the backbone of the family and the society. In Nigeria, women are responsible for 100% of the work of processing crops, 50% in animal husbandry and 60% in marketing. Women farmers from Oyo State, Nigeria, contribute 50% to planting, 95% to weeding and 85% to harvesting crops [5]. In the community, they hold unassailable preeminence, playing active role in physical rural development programs like construction of public facilities such as schools, public toilets, hospitals, dispensaries and general sanitation [6]. They contribute a major proportion of family farm labour to the production of food crops as well as provide the major support for

themselves and their children by engaging in the full production of food crops or by obtaining income through non-agricultural activities such as animal keeping, making handicrafts and weaving.

In Nigeria, women constitute about 50% of the population [7]. Obasanjo and Mabogunje [8] asserted that it is impossible for any country to make significant strides in development, while marginalizing such a large and important segment of its society. The knowledge about women and their involvement in community development is essential in all aspects of policy, planning and implementation of programs directed towards providing the rural population with basic services such as water, electricity, health, education and job opportunities. World Bank [9] affirmed that women are frequently the builders of self-help housing improvements and figure prominently in craft, marketing and other activities, which largely support their community. Mayoux [10] also submitted that it is important to consult and include women in any development activities. He argued that projects are unlikely to succeed without the full and equal involvement of women. In the definition of development, there are two main views: one that sees development as a quantitative expansion and increase in income, and the other that sees it as qualitative improvement or unfolding potentials [11].

Development in whatever way it is defined implies something positive, something desirable, a form of social change leading to expansion of choices, increase in skills, improvement in quality of life and wellbeing. Participation of people in development process was put forward through the human development concept, which centers on people as agent of development. This concept therefore emphasized participation of people as an important means to development process. This implies that development occurs inside the people. Even if development policies are to be formulated for political reasons, they can only be effective with active and willing participation of the rural dwellers. Hence, participation and development become inseparable part, with participation acting as a means to development (the end). Keough [12] viewed participatory development as the involvement of would-be

beneficiaries in their own advancement such that they are actors/agents of change for meaningful and sustainable development. Participation is a multidimensional dynamic process that takes varying forms including decision making, planning, programming, control, implementation and evaluation [13]. The concept of participation according to Bamberger et al. [14] should be accepted as an active and logical approach or methodology in which the people for which the initiative is meant to assist take the initiative needed. In other words, development project should be established and implemented in response to specific needs as well as requirement identified by the local communities themselves in collaboration with all the interested parties.

While including representatives from various groups, women's participation enriches the processes; however, women's participation in development processes often faces certain socio-cultural and sometime political barriers. Some of these, which are membership criteria and requirements in participatory projects, are generally based on a male norm, explicitly or implicitly excluding women.

It becomes important to examine the extent of women's involvement in community development projects and assess their participation vis-à-vis socioeconomic constraints. The import of this, rest on the need for gender mainstreaming in development as an important aspect of sustainable development. The study's objectives were to:

- i. identify community development projects in the study area,
- ii. determine the extent of participation of women in community development projects in the study area and
- iii. examine its relationship with women's socioeconomic characteristics.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Ido Local Government Area (ILGA) of Oyo State, Nigeria. ILGA was created in 1989. It shares boundaries with Oluyole, Ibarapa, Akinyel, Ibadan North West local government areas of Oyo State and Odeda LGA in Ogun State. The population of the study was rural women in ILGA of Oyo State. Sampling was based on the 10 wards in the LGA. Two villages were selected purposively from each of these wards. The selection was

based on the availability of at least one community development project (CDP) in the village. From each of these villages, 17 women were randomly selected to make a total of 340 rural women but only 310 questionnaires were properly filled and these were used for data analyses. A face-to-face interview, focus group discussion and observation method was used to collect information from the women. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts, percentages and measure of central tendency was used to describe the respondents' (women) socioeconomic characteristics. Participation was taken as the involvement of women in CDP; therefore, the extent of participation indicates the degree of their involvement in CDP. For the purpose of empirical assessment, five phases of participation were identified and specific activities for each phase were listed (Table 3). For each of the stages, a nominal score of 1 was assigned for participation and a score of 0 for non-participation. The overall score for all the phases of participation is 14 for each project. These scores were assigned arbitrarily and used to categorize women into the following levels of participation: high participation (9 – 14), average participation (6 – 8), low participation (1 – 5) and no participation (0). Chi-square test was conducted to ascertain the association between socioeconomic characteristics of women and their participation.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Socioeconomic Characteristics of Women

Table 1 shows the distribution of women based on their socioeconomic characteristics. The mean age of women was 45 years, while the mean household size was 5. This is rather contrary to the belief of a large household size in the rural communities. Majority (71%) of the women were married, which shows the likelihood of them experiencing some structural gender inequality. This may have significant influence on their participation depending on the mutual understanding between them and their spouses. The educational status of the women shows that 42.9% had one form of education or the other with only 2.6% having tertiary education. Although, only 5.2% of the women had education above primary level, more than half (57.1%) of the women had no formal education. This may determine their level of understanding of project technicalities and a basis for the expectation of their attitude towards participation in community

development project. There were 61.3% of the women that were into farming as major occupation. On income, 33.9% had income level of less than ₦5,000 (US\$ 22.7) per month, while only 1.6% had an income above ₦20,000 (US\$ 90.9) per month. The monthly income was ₦8,758.39 (US\$ 39.8) which means that the women made on the average, ₦291.95 (US\$ 1.3) per day which is below the one dollar per day poverty line. In relative terms, the per capita income of these women still reflects a generally low income and high possibility of deprivation and poor living standard.

### 3.2 Community Development Projects in the Study Area

Four CDPs were identified in the study area; namely: primary health/maternity centre, market center, deep well sinking and

building/rehabilitation of schools. Table 2 shows the various projects and the villages where these projects were located. There was at least one of these projects in each of the villages selected, but in all, there were 10 health maternity/health centre projects, 13 market projects, 7 deep well projects and 12 school building/rehabilitation projects. Three of these villages: Adeogun, Omi-Adio and Aba Aremu had all the four projects completed during the course of this study. Maternity centres and schools are often shared by more than one community, particularly those that are adjacent or close to each other. This is to reduce cost and also facilitates local partnership and joint management among communities. The experience is that, cost of management is lowered when communities share projects and social relationships are built, which enhances effective management and sustainability.

**Table 1. Distribution of women based on their socioeconomic characteristics (N = 310)**

Parameter	Percentage	Mean (mode)
i) <b>Age distribution (yrs)</b>		
• ≤ 30	7.4	45.4 years
• 31 – 40	24.5	
• 41 – 60	43.5	(41 – 60)
• 51 – 60	16.7	
• > 60	7.4	
ii) <b>Marital status</b>		
• Married	71.0	(married)
• Divorced	12.2	
• Widowed	16.8	
iii) <b>Household size</b>		
• 1 – 3	16.1	5 persons
• 4 – 6	61.9	(4 – 6)
• > 6	21.9	
iv) <b>Educational status</b>		
• No formal education	57.1	
• Adult education	21.6	(No formal education)
• Primary education	16.1	
• Secondary education	2.6	
• Tertiary education	2.6	
v) <b>Primary occupation</b>		
• No occupation	22.2	
• Farming	61.3	(farming)
• Trading	15.2	
• Agro-processing	1.3	
vi) <b>Monthly income (₦)</b>		
• ≤ 5,000	33.9	
• 5,001 – 10,000	35.5	₦8,758.39
• 10,001 – 15,000	21.3	(₦5,001 – 10,000)
• 15,001 – 20,000	7.7	
• > 20,000	1.6	

*Key: Figures and words in parentheses are the modal class*

It was also discovered that market was the most common projects carried out by the LGA in most of the villages. In most rural markets, women are the main economic agents, engaged in sales of agricultural produce and other essential needs at the local level; therefore, the construction of market stores and concrete floor pavements for displaying wares will open up the market economy of the communities and impact directly on their livelihoods. The market also generates revenue for the local government. Most of the markets are operated weekly, attracting traders and transporters. Apart from the economic relevance, the market center serves as a meeting point for social relationship, networking and exchange of ideas and culture. They also serve as official and unofficial meeting venues for community groups.

In the villages where the projects were completed, the experience of the women is that, the projects had reduced their work load, enhanced their access to health services, created opportunities to earn more income and improve the study environment for their children. Fabusoro et al. [15] found that the daily working time for local women in Nigeria was about 13 hours and this includes time for working on farm, processing, cooking and taking care of children and family, and for social gathering. Their experiences before was that they walk some distance (of about 3 – 5 km) to get their products to nearby markets. For those that use public transportation, situating a market close to their village reduces cost of transportation. For healthcare services, they now have direct access to primary health facilities at least for 12 hours of the day, which would be of significant importance in reducing health hazards

child and maternal mortality. Before the conduct of this survey, majority of the schools studied in the LGAs had their buildings dilapidated and roofs removed by strong wind. The school rehabilitation project has made the school environment conducive for learning. The deep wells sunk had reduced the dependence of the women on running rivers, for drinking and other domestic uses. These running rivers are usually the sources of waterborne diseases in the rural areas of Nigeria.

### 3.3 Participation of Women at Different Phases of CDPs

Participation in development projects comes in different forms and at different phases of the projects. For the five phases: identification, decision making, planning, implementation and evaluation, the roles played by women are presented in Table 3 for each of the projects. The identification phase was to explore development projects options available, while the decision-making phase was where evaluation against community needs and priorities and funding capacity of the local government authority was made, which helped in the selection of an appropriate project. On the average, 33.5% of the rural women participated in the identification phase for market establishment. At this phase, 38.1%, 40.3%, 35.2% and 40.6% of the women participated in the activities for health, market, deep well and school project (initiator), respectively. Though, their participation was low, their involvement was more of project initiator and opinion seeking through informal sources from other communities. The opinion of women is very important in project selection and site preferences.

**Table 2. Local government development projects in the selected villages**

S/no	Village	Project	S/no	Village	Project
1	Odebode	A, D	11	Akufo	B, C, D
2	Oyawe	A, D	12	Olorombo	B
3	Lamini	A, B, D	13	Onikoko	B
4	Adeogun	A, B, C, D	14	Ido	B, D
5	Anigilaje	A	15	Asa	B
6	Omi-Adio	A, B, C, D	16	Elenusonso	B, C, D
7	Aba Aremu	A, B, C, D	17	Aba Oni	B
8	Okuside	A, B, D	18	Adejumo	B
9	Apete	A, C, D	19	Akufo	C, D
10	Elesu	A	20	Aba Edun	C

Key: A – Health/maternity centre; B – Market center; C – Deep well  
D – Building / rehabilitation of schools

**Table 3. Percentage distribution of women according to their participation in different phases of the local government community development projects (N = 310)**

<b>S/no</b>						
<b>1.</b>	<b>Identification phase</b>					
	<b>Project</b>	<b>Project initiator</b>	<b>Information giver</b>	<b>Opinion giver</b>	<b>Opinion seeker</b>	<b>Average</b>
	Health / maternity centre	38.1	0.0	20.0	44.5	25.6
	Market establishment	40.3	24.5	21.3	48.1	33.5
	Sinking of well	35.2	0.0	20.0	35.2	22.6
	Building / rehabilitation of schools	40.6	0.0	19.4	35.2	23.8
<b>2.</b>	<b>Decision making phase</b>					
	<b>Project</b>	<b>Attendance at meetings</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Voting</b>	<b>Holding office</b>	<b>Average</b>
	Health / maternity centre	50.0	27.7	6.1	10.3	23.5
	Market establishment	54.2	31.0	12.3	1.9	24.8
	Sinking of well	44.5	24.5	6.5	0.0	18.9
	Building / rehabilitation of schools	45.8	26.5	8.4	0.0	20.2
<b>3.</b>	<b>Planning phase</b>					
	<b>Project</b>	<b>Attendance at meetings</b>		<b>Financial contribution</b>	<b>Average</b>	
	Health / maternity centre	41.3		13.5	27.4	
	Market establishment	43.5		21.3	32.4	
	Sinking of well	38.1		19.4	28.7	
	Building / rehabilitation of schools	40.6		18.1	29.4	
<b>4</b>	<b>Implementation phase</b>					
	<b>Project</b>	<b>Labour-hour donation</b>		<b>Supervisory role</b>	<b>Average</b>	
	Health / maternity centre	50.0		18.4	34.2	
	Market establishment	53.2		18.1	35.6	
	Sinking of well	36.1		12.3	24.2	
	Building / rehabilitation of schools	43.2		11.9	27.6	
<b>5</b>	<b>Evaluation phase</b>					
	<b>Project</b>	<b>Evaluation meeting</b>		<b>Evaluation report</b>	<b>Average</b>	
	Health / maternity centre	14.8		34.2	24.5	
	Market establishment	17.7		56.8	37.3	
	Sinking of well	14.5		32.2	23.4	
	Building / rehabilitation of schools	15.5		22.5	19.0	

- *Multiple response given*

The decision-making phase involves several meetings and negotiations on features and location of the project. In cases where the project was to be shared by two or more communities, there were needs for compromise among different parties on location of the projects in particular. This was to avoid conflict that may arise in the presence of construction or use. At the decision-making phase, participation of women was higher in attendance at meetings than other activities. On the average, 23.5% (health), 24.8% (market), 18.9% (deep well), and 20.2% (school) of the women participated in the four projects. The meetings also serve as a source of information on progress and challenges on selected projects. It was discovered during field survey, that while many women attended meetings, some men also attended. This confirms the assertion of Beall and Todes [16] that while women play active roles in development projects at the local level, they often allow men to lead.

The planning phase involves drawing out plans and converting all the ideas into a framework for implementation. At this phase, the communities and the local government still had opportunity to change certain decisions. Also, at this phase, women participated mainly in attendance at meetings. This is necessary to keep abreast of unfolding events and share this among other women. Only few participated in financial contributions due to their low income level. The projects were also funded by the local government and therefore required less funding support from the rural people especially women.

At implementation, women as well as men were expected to contribute labour-hour and give in kind donations. On the average, 35.6 and 34.2% of women participated in market project and health centre projects, respectively by serving as site workers for the contractors, especially during the laying of foundation for some projects. Women were needed for water collection from deep well to the project site, while men were needed for clearing the site. Women were expected to lend belongings such as bowls, planks, sofa, cutlass, and shovels among others that may be needed on site at emergencies. The labour-hour were needed to reduce cost and as counterpart support from local people to the project. For supervision, it was expected that both men and women would be at hand to give suggestions to contractors as the project made progress. Construction for market and health projects had more of the women participating

since they are the major operators of markets at local community levels, while the health project would give them access to primary healthcare services. Participation was very low at the evaluation phase; however, verbal evaluation report was given by the women on the usefulness of the projects to their livelihoods and improvement in quality of life.

### **3.4 Extent of Participation of Women**

Table 4 gives a general picture of extent of women's participation in the four projects. Women participation in the entire projects could be adjudged low based on the results in Table 4. Majority of the women did not participate in any of the activities for the projects. There were at least over 50% of the women that did not participate in any of the activities for each project. First-hand information obtained revealed that since the projects were funded by the government, their inputs were seen from some quarters as merely political. However, having over 40% of local women seeking information, attending meetings and contributing both cash and in kind, shows women's significance in community development, a reduction in women marginalization and a transition towards equity. The results show the sectors that are of importance to women's welfare; that is, economy (market) and health, as economic agents, rural women take active part in operating local markets, growing local economy and contributing to household livelihoods. As a major necessity for reproductive activities and child welfare, the health projects occupy a prime place to the women.

### **3.5 Influence of Women's Socioeconomic Characteristics on Participation in CDP**

The chi-square result shows association between socioeconomic characteristics of women and their participation in CDP. The result (Table 5) shows that occupation and income were important associative factors in participation. This implies that the class structure of most rural society participating in CDP may be determined by income level and occupation. This corroborates the findings of Oakely [17] and Christopher [18] that resources are usually mobilize by group members (beneficiaries in CDPs) which include pooling of savings, asset and ideas. Since participation in project activities require financial contribution, it is most likely that the most affluent and influential take the lead in

**Table 4. Distribution of women based on their participation score (N = 310)**

	<b>Project / participation scoring</b>	<b>Health / maternity centre</b>	<b>Market center</b>	<b>Deep well</b>	<b>Building / rehabilitation of schools</b>
0	No participation	34.6	49.0	79.7	67.7
1 – 5	Low participation	17.7	29.4	15.5	26.5
6 – 8	Average participation	47.7	16.4	4.8	5.8
9 – 14	High participation	0.0	5.2	0.0	0.0

**Table 5. Chi square result of relationship between socioeconomic characteristics of women and their participation**

<b>Project / socioeconomic factors</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Major occupation</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Marital status</b>
<b>Health/maternity centre</b>					
• $\chi^2$	9.37	34.90	33.03	386.58	28.72
• df	12	12	12	12	9
• $P_{<0.05}$	0.67	0.00**	0.00**	0.00**	0.00**
<b>Market center</b>					
• $\chi^2$	14.41	9.64	34.99	377.18	10.62
• df	12	12	12	12	9
• $P_{<0.05}$	0.28	0.84	0.00**	0.00**	0.62
<b>Deep well</b>					
• $\chi^2$	9.15	10.75	39.08	340.15	33.87
• df	12	12	12	12	9
• $P_{<0.05}$	0.33	0.38	0.00**	0.00**	0.00**
<b>Building/rehabilitation of schools</b>					
• $\chi^2$	6.18	14.13	30.06	478.25	37.08
• df	12	12	12	12	9
• $P_{<0.05}$	0.63	0.17	0.00**	0.00**	0.00**

participation. The positive association between income and participation indicates that women with higher income will have higher propensity to participate in CDP. Marital status as a factor in maternity centre, deep well and school rehabilitation, point to the fact that these projects are often utilized by married women with children. It may therefore be necessary to consider the demographic features of communities in situating development projects. Education have positive association with health/maternity centre [19], which of course underscores the patronage and use of modern health services by women that are educated. In many rural areas in Nigeria, the use of traditional medical system is common and pervasive in places with low education. While the traditional system is not under scrutiny in this paper, the use of modern health services in the rural areas however, will improve educational orientation

(formal and informal) among women. The need for this in reducing morbidity and mortality and providing first-hand medical services cannot be overemphasized.

#### **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Findings from the study show that women participate in CDP in various ways ranging from funding, provision labour of, and attendance at meetings among others. In all the activities and phases of the project however, men took centre stage in directing discussion and making important decision. The role of government in community development was more of funding but the government recognized the fact that lack of local participation will result in poor planning and faulty execution processes, which might make the project irrelevant to the needs of priorities of



local people. Participation in these projects gave a sense of ownership on the part of the intended beneficiaries and higher commitment to the management and maintenance of these projects. It is therefore recommended that women's relevance in local development should not be undervalued or shrouded. In these projects sites, reduction in women marginalization and a transition towards equity was emerging. Therefore, it is necessary for government to give attention to improvement in the occupational conditions of the women and educational status. Rather than seeking political gains, local authorities should seek welfare and improvement in quality of life of the rural women. This will achieve rapid rural development and enhance women's contribution to local economy, household livelihoods and community social life. It is also important that adequate information of demographic and social information of local communities be collected before situating any project. This will give information on various social classes and needs and guide in effective mobilization at project phases. Since women are usually the primary beneficiaries of CDP, there is the need for educational orientation on management of project after completion. While the cultural headship of men should not be contested, women's right of opinion and association should not be denied under any cultural disguise.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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