

## Constraints to Gender Participation in Rural Community Development in Abia State, Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined constraints to gender participation in rural community development in Abia State. A multistage sampling procedure was used in the selection of 120 households for the study. Data was analysed with descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that the mean age of the respondents was 50.5 years, 75.7% of them were married and had a mean household size of 6 persons. The average years spent in school by the respondents was 12 years, their major occupation was farming (52.4%) and monthly income was ₦65,739.00. Their major constraints in carrying out self-help rural community development for males and females were fund-raising problem ( $\bar{x}=3.2$  and  $\bar{x}=3.0$ ), embezzlement of fund ( $\bar{x}=3.1$  and  $\bar{x}=2.8$ ), nonchalant attitude to accountability ( $\bar{x}=3.1$  and  $\bar{x}=2.5$ ), mismanagement of fund ( $\bar{x}=3.1$  and  $\bar{x}=3.8$ ). Some of the strategies employed by both males and females for active participation were payment of fine ( $\bar{x}=2.4$  and  $\bar{x}=2.5$ ) and praise/recommendation for participation ( $\bar{x}=2.4$  and  $\bar{x}=2.7$ ). A significant difference existed between rural community development constraints of males and females in the areas of non-challant attitude to accountability ( $t=2.4$ ,  $p\leq 0.05$ ) and politicization of projects ( $t=2.2$ ,  $p\leq 0.05$ ). There was also a significant difference between rural community development strategies employed by males*

*and females only in the area of non-participants not allowed to enjoy the full benefits of the project ( $t=-4.8$ ,  $p\leq 0.05$ ). Based on the result of this study, it was recommended that the federal, state and local governments should be involved in multi-media enlightenment or sensitization to rural communities on the possible strategies for active participation to rural community development projects. This will go a long way in helping them know the strategies they can employ to succeed in rural community development.*

**Keywords:** Gender participation, constraints to gender participation, community development,

## Introduction

Over three billion people, (55%) of the total world population, 694 million Africans (59.6%) and 95 million (52.2%) Nigerians live and derive their livelihood from rural areas (United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects, 2014; Nchuchuwe, and Adejuwon, 2012). Also about 70% of food in Nigeria is produced by peasant farmers who reside in the rural areas as family units (Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria Newsletter, 2015) They serve as the country's principal market for domestic manufactures because people from the rural population engage in primary activities that form the foundation for any economic development. Although, the rural areas are assets to the nations including Nigeria, they continue to lack amenities.

The rural areas are usually grossly neglected as far as development projects and infrastructure are concerned (Nchuchuwe, and Adejuwon, 2012). As a result of the relative underdevelopment of the rural areas when compared with the urban centres, rural areas are usually zones of high propensity for out-migration and other associated problems (Ogidefa, 2010).

In the past, successive government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), cooperatives, individuals through private initiatives, corporate bodies as well as International Organizations embarked on several programmes targeted at rural development (Ogidefa, 2010). Most of those programmes had good objectives but due to some constraints like wrong approaches and strategies employed, the issue of lack of development continues to affect the rural areas. World Bank (2012) in Nwobiala (2015) confirmed this fact by saying that lack of participation in donor sponsored programmes has led to the failure of many development efforts in developing countries. In support of the importance of appropriate strategy to development, Nchuchuwe and Adejuwon (2012) opined that Africa has abundant arable land and labour which, with sound policies and effective implementation strategies, could be translated into increased production, incomes and food security, but this has not materialized because of lack of consistent policies and effective implementation strategies.

It has been noted in Nigeria that the philosophy of peoples' participation in rural community development (RCD) is increasingly gaining acceptance as an important instrument for mobilizing resources and organizing the rural populace to have cogent

interests in providing for their wellbeing (Emeh, Eluwa, and Ukah, 2012). Among the peoples' participation strategy is self-help initiative. Self-help initiatives for developing Nigeria's rural communities are attempts by concerned individuals and groups to bridge the gap between the efforts of governments at overall national development and the near total invisibility of many of these communities (Ebong, Otu and Ogwumike, 2013). The use of right strategy is important for there to be sustainable RCD.

. Rural community development is a kind of development that emphasizes self-help by citizens and also initiates a people-directed process that is based upon their own perception of their needs (Ekong, 2010). It operates with four major principles which include: emphasis on community self-help; attention to communities' felt needs; the development of community as an integrated whole; and technical assistance. Among the communities known for self-help RCD projects are some communities in Ohafia and Abiriba and Umuahia south local Government areas of Abia State (Steve and Williams, 2012)). In the past, the rural people (males and females) were involved in mainly in traditional projects such as sweeping of community markets, hunting, group farming among others. But today many community people are expanding the horizon of their self-help RCD projects by embarking on more sophisticated and more expensive self-help projects such as building of class room blocks, erecting of market stalls, provision electricity among others. While few communities are developing their areas through self-help, others are waiting for the government. These communities have also used some participation strategies which had helped them to take care of the constraints they must have encountered in their efforts to succeed. Therefore, there is the need to know these constraints and participation strategies employed by the males and females of these communities that have helped them to succeed in their self-help efforts for RCD.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The overall objective of the study was to assess the constraints to gender participation in rural community development in Abia State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- 1) describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents;
- 2) ascertain constraints to males and female participation in RCD; and
- 3) ascertain perceived strategies used by males and females for more participation in RCD.

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the constraints to participation in self help RCD projects among males and females in the study area; and

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the participation strategies used by the males and the females in self help RCD projects in the study area.

## Methodology

The study was carried out in Abia State, Nigeria. Abia State is one of the five states of Southeast, Nigeria. It has a population of 2,833,999 (Peterside, 2007; Wikipedia, 2010) and seventeen (17) Local Government Areas (LGAs). Abia State is known for self-help community development projects especially communities in Ohafia and Umuahia South Local Governments Area of the State (Steve, and Williams, 2012). Population of the study consists of all males and females who participate in self-help rural community development in the study area. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents. In the first stage, three LGAs were purposively selected based on the predominance of self-help community development projects in the areas. These include Ohafia, Umuahia south and Bende. In the second stage, two rural communities were also purposively selected from each of the selected LGAs making a total of six (6) rural communities for the study. The selection is based on the predominance of community (self-help) projects in these communities. In the third stage, twenty (20) respondents comprising of 10 males and 10 females were randomly selected from each of the chosen communities. Thus a total sample size of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents was used for this work. Data were collected using questionnaire and were analysed with descriptive such as mean and frequency, and inferential statistics.

## Measurement of variables

The respondents were asked to indicate their actual age in years which was later grouped as follows: 20 - 29 years, 30 - 39 years, 40 - 49 years, 50 - 59 years and above 60 - 69 years. Those between 15 – 30 years were regarded as youths. They were asked to give their sex as either male or female. Their marital status was obtained by asking them to indicate whether they were married, single, separated, divorced or widowed. They were asked to indicate their educational level. The categories of the educational level were listed as follows: No formal education; primary education; secondary education; tertiary education. The respondents were also requested to state number of years spent in acquiring formal education. They were required to indicate the number of years they had been involved in community development projects which were later grouped as follows: below 1 year, 1-4 years, 5-8 years, 9-12 years, 13-16 years, 17-20 years and above 20 years. The household size of the respondents was obtained by asking them to state the household size (number of people living together and feeding from the same pot). This was later grouped as follows: 1-2 persons, 3-4 persons, 5-6 persons, 7-8 persons and more than 8 persons.

To identify perceived constraints to male and female participation in RCD in the study area, a list of possible constraints such as problem of land acquisition, embezzlement of fund, lack of interest of people in RCD among others was made available. Respondents were asked to indicate the level of seriousness of each constraints on a

four point Likert type scale of: to a great extent= 4, to little extent= 3, to very little extent=2 and to no extent=1. The values were summed to get 10 and divided to get 2.5. Variables with the mean of greater than or equal to 2.5 was seen as possible constraints to community development.

To ascertain strategies used to motivate males and females in participating in RCD respondents were required to indicate their perceived strategies that motivated them in participating actively in RCD on a 3 point Likert type scale of, to a great extent (3), to a little extent (2) and to no extent (1). The mean was 2. Any variable with a mean value of 2 and above was regarded as a strategy. While strategies with mean values less than 2 were regarded as no strategies. Variables included in the list were: showering of praises, promotion, gift, punishment, excommunication, among others.

## Results and Discussion

### Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 indicates that the mean ages of the respondents were (males=52.7, females=48.3) and while a greater proportion (33%) of the males fall within the age brackets of 51-60 years, a greater proportion (37%) of the females were 40-50 years old. This result implies that middle aged persons engaged in community development in the study area. Therefore, they have the potentials to develop themselves through self-help projects. The finding agrees with Adisa, (2013) who reported a similar age of respondents' participation in community development projects in Osun State. Majority (males=72.5%, females=79.5%) of the respondents were married. The implication of the result is that most of the respondents were married and married people are responsible and so may easily participate actively in rural community development to develop their communities. Also majority of the respondents (males=56.6%, females=60.5%) had a household size of between 5 - 8 persons. who found that mean household size of the respondents was 7 persons in Kwara, Kogi and Benue states, respectively. Greater proportion of the respondents (males=43.7%, females=43.7%) had tertiary education. The mean of the number of years respondents spent in school were (males=12.4, females=11.6). The result implies that the respondents are educated and educated people appreciate RCD and so participate actively. The result agrees with the finding of Adisa (2013), who reported a similar result in Osun State of Nigeria. The mean farm sizes of the respondents were (males=2.6, female=3.6) hectares. The implication of the result is that the most of the respondents are small scale farmers. The result collaborates those of Igbokwe and Madukwe, (2015) and Yemisi, Ogunlela and Aisha (2009) which reported that most Nigerian farmers are small scale farmers.



**Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their personal characteristics**

Variables	Male		Female	
	Percentage (%) (n=120)	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Percentage (%) (n=119)	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )
Age (years)				
less than 31	8.4		5.0	
31-40	12.6	52.7 (SD=13.4)	23.5	48.3 (SD=11.1)
41-50	20.2		37.0	
51-60	33.		18.5	
above 60	25.2		16.0	
Marital status				
Single	15.0		5.9	
Married	72.5		79.0	
Widowed	9.2		12.6	
Divorced	2.5		2.5	
Separated	0.8		0.0	
Household size (persons)				
1-4	27.4		26.9	
5-8	56.6	7 (SD=4.1)	60.5	6 (SD=2.7)
9-12	11.5		9.2	
More than 12	4.4		3.4	
Educational level				
No formal Education	7.6		13.4	
Primary school	15.1		18.5	
Secondary school	33.6		24.4	
Tertiary	43.7		43.7	
Mean of years spent in acquiring formal education	12.4 (SD=4.9)		11.6 (SD =5.5)	
Farm size (ha)				
1-3	81.0	2.6 (SD=2.7)	71.7	3.6 (SD=6.4)
4-6	13.8		20.0	
7-9	3.4		3.3	
Above 9	1.7		5.0	

**Source: Field survey, 2015**

### Perceived Constraints to Gender Participation in RCD

Table 2 shows that the major constraints to rural community development as perceived by both males and females in the study area were the problems of land acquisition (male  $\bar{x}$  = 2.7, female  $\bar{x}$  = 2.6), fund raising problem (male  $\bar{x}$  = 3.2, female  $\bar{x}$  = 2.8), embezzlement and mismanagement of fund (male  $\bar{x}$  = 3.1, female  $\bar{x}$  = 2.8), non-challant attitude to accountability (male  $\bar{x}$  = 3.1, female  $\bar{x}$  = 2.5), lack of interest of people in some RCD projects (male  $\bar{x}$  = 2.8, female  $\bar{x}$  = 2.5) and bad leadership (male  $\bar{x}$  = 2.5, female  $\bar{x}$  = 2.5). This result corroborates the findings of Apesughur et al, (2014) which reported that mismanagement of fund constituted a major constraint to self-help community development in the study he conducted. The result is also in line with that of Ehisuoria, and Akhimien, (2012) which asserted that lack of capital is among the constraints to self help projects. In addition, Emeka, (2013) reported that to attain sustainable development there must be good leadership.

A comparison of gender differences in perceived constraints to participation in self-help community development projects revealed that there is a significant differences between the constraints associate with males and females in the areas of land acquisition ( $t = -2.1, P \leq 0.05$ ), non-challant attitude to accountability ( $t = 2.4, P \leq 0.05$ ), politicization ( $t = 2.2, P \leq 0.05$ ) and improper coordination ( $t = 2.0, P \leq 0.05$ ). This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the constraints of the males and the females to RCD. The alternative hypothesis is therefore accepted.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their constraints to participation in RCD projects**

Constraints	Male		Female		t – value
	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D	
Land acquisition problem	2.7*	1.2	2.6*	1.1	-2.1**
Fund- raising problem	3.2*	0.9	3.0*	0.9	-0.4
Embezzlement of fund	3.1*	1.0	2.8*	1.1	0.2
Lack of interest of people in some RCD projects	2.8*	1.1	2.5*	1.1	0.9
Non- challant attitude to accountability	3.1*	1.0	2.5*	1.1	2.4**
Bad leadership	2.5*	1.2	2.5*	1.5	0.9
Politicisation	2.7*	1.2	2.3	1.1	2.2**
Lack of trust on the initiator of projects	2.7*	1.1	2.5*	1.1	1.4
Mismanagement of fund	3.1*	1.1	2.8*	1.1	1.7
Improper coordination	2.6*	1.2	2.3	1.1	2.0**
Stealing of CD project materials by some community members	2.4	1.2	2.3	1.2	1.2
Paternalistic posture of authority	2.3	1.2	2.3	1.2	-0.3
Intral inter group conflicts	2.2	1.1	2.2	1.1	1.2
Quarrelling/ disagreement	2.2	1.0	2.2	1.1	1.6
Civil unrest (communal clashes)	1.9	1.0	2.1	1.0	0.3

\* Serious problem \*\*  $P \leq 0.05$

### Perceive Strategies to Enhance Gender Participation in RCD

Entries in table 3 show that the respondents in Abia State perceived the following as good strategies for active participation in RCD: The adoption of payment of fine due to non-participation in RCD project by both male ( $\bar{x} = 2.3$ ) and female ( $\bar{x} = 2.5$ ). This is one the most important strategy used by males and females to a very high extent for active participation in RCD. Payment of fine is a kind of tax imposed on defaulters of RCD by communities. With this levy imposition, people are forced to make out time to participate in RCD. Others are open rebuke (male  $\bar{x} = 2.0$ , female  $\bar{x} = 2.0$ ); .Under this method, anyone who is found wanting is cautioned openly by community members thereby putting the person to shame. Many see this as an insult on their person and would always want to avoid that thereby participating whenever there is RCD that requires their participation (FGD, 2015).The respondents also agreed that the adoption of non-participants not allowed to have full benefits of projects (male  $\bar{x} = 2.0$ , female  $\bar{x} = 2.3$ ) was as well used to promote participation to RCD by community members. According to them, any community member who refused to participate in an on-going project is barred from sharing in the benefits at the project's completion (FGD,2015). Regular visitation by the leaders (male  $\bar{x} = 2.2$ , female  $\bar{x} = 2.2$ ). Under this strategy, as pointed out by the respondents, if there is community project, the

community leaders from time to time visit their members to encourage them on the need for their active participation, stressing the importance of such project to their community development (FGD, 2015); appealing during meetings (male  $\bar{x} = 2.2$ , female  $\bar{x} = 2.3$ ); praise / recommendation (male  $\bar{x} = 2.4$ , female  $\bar{x} = 2.5$ ); During community meetings the members use it as a forum to rob minds together on what projects they need and as well as encourage one another to help develop their communities. Also the meeting serves as a forum to praise and recommend those who are participating actively in RCD projects for some posts (FGD,2015). Others strategies are allowing participants to have full benefits of the projects(male  $\bar{x} = 2.3$ , female  $\bar{x} = 2.6$ ). On the other hand they had a low perception of exemption of participant from certain activities as a strategy to self-help participation in RCD (male  $\bar{x} = 1.8$ , female  $\bar{x} = 1.9$ ). The overall results on what the males and the females see as strategies for active participation of community member are slightly different in some areas and similar in many areas. The similarities could be attributed to the fact that both the males and the females have the same cultural background and those from similar cultural background have many things in common. This result collaborates that of Ivande (2012) which stated that culture influences people's behaviour. Also the standard deviation of less than one for all the respondents indicates that the respondents did not vary much from the mean. This implies that the respondents had related opinions and so could be recommended for policy formulation about gender in rural community development.

Ajayi and Otuya, (2006) had also reported that to have maximum participation of people in self-help projects, that imposition of sanctions, appeals during regular meetings and regular visits by the project leaders; punishments like payment of fine, open rebuke, not being allowed to have full share of project benefits and rewards for active participation of community members like praises/recommendations, and enjoyment of full benefits could serve as strategies for active participation in RCD.

The result also showed significant differences between males and females RCD strategies only in the area of Non-participants not allowed to have full benefits of RCD projects. So the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the strategies of males and females in the promotion of RCD participation is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted

**Table 3 Distribution of respondents according to their participation strategies**

Strategy	Male		Female		t – value
	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D	
Payment of fine due non-participation in CD	2.4*	0.7	2.5*	0.7	0.2
Open rebuke	2.0*	0.8	2.0*	0.8	0.9
Non-participants not allowed to have full benefits of projects	2.0*	0.8	2.3*	0.7	-4.8**
Regular visitation of the members by the leaders	2.2*	0.7	2.2*	0.8	-1.8
Appealing during meetings	2.3*	0.7	2.2*	0.7	-0.7
Praise/recommendation for participation	2.4*	0.6	2.7*	0.7	-0.8



Participant are allowed to enjoy full benefits of projects	2.3*	0.7	2.6*	0.6	-1.5
Participants being exempted from certain activities	1.8	0.8	1.9	0.8	1.1

\* Good strategy \*\* P≤ 0.05

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The major constraints to male and female participation in rural community development were finance, poor leadership and some community members not willing to accept some RCD projects. There were significant differences in the constraints to participation in RCD faced between male and female in the areas of land acquisition, non-challant attitude to accountability, politicization and improper coordination.

The federal, state and local governments should be involved in multi-media enlightenment or sensitization of rural communities on strategies for active participation to rural community development projects. This will go a long way in helping them know the strategies they can employ to succeed in rural community development.

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