

Women Organizations' Activities on Community Development in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of women organisations on community development activities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Three research questions and three hypotheses were formulated for the study. The population of the study consisted of 10,150 women who are members of women organizations in the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Through simple random sampling technique a total of 385 respondents were selected for the study. The research instrument used for the study was a questionnaire which was developed by the researchers and which yielded a reliability index of 0.71 and content validity of 0.90. The data generated from the study were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics. The findings revealed that women organisations play active roles in community development activities in the study area. The study recommended that the various governments (local, state and federal) should give matching grants and adequate funding to women organisations that are involved in community development activities.

Keywords: Women; Organisation; Community; Development; Ikwerre; Rivers State; Nigeria

Introduction

Women played significant roles within their families and communities. Their roles are important in economic, social and political areas, as tried to influence government policies on those matters, such as the franchise for women, taxation of women, educational opportunities for girls and property rights and conditions of service for women which determine the status and roles of women in society (Mba, 1997). Okwakpam and Eni (2012) has it that studies by Johnson (1966), Hallet (1965), Mba (1982), Awe (1991) and Denze (1994) asserted that women have been involved in community development programmes since the 19th



century. Since 1950, women have contributed greatly to the development of their communities (Moser, 2010); especially in area of anti-poverty approach or reduction of poverty aimed at improving and advancing women's productivity.

Women are generally keen and enthusiastic to get involved in programmes that will improve their well-being and that of their communities (Akpanam, 2010). Women engage in community building to improve their own lives, those of their families and of the people living around them (Gittell, Ortega-Bustamante and Steff, 1999).

Women have created innovative, comprehensive programmes to meet the needs of their communities. They have established themselves as leaders in the community development field and acquired the skills that have brought positive change to their communities (Gittell, *et. al.*, 1999). They act as volunteers to work for the improvement of their communities. Indeed, they are responsible for development issues of the community only (Deekor and Nnodim, 2005); which them the bedrock of the development of any nation (Ucheagu, 1999).

Women have formed themselves into groups or organisations in order to move the communities forward. Women organisations are inclusive are primarily aimed at helping people within a local community to identify their social needs, to consider the most effective ways of meeting these and to set about doing so, as far as their available resources permit.

Community development activities are being promoted by these women organisations through the construction of feeder roads, provision of social services like deep wells, sinking of bore holes, creation of bus stops and building of waiting sheds; advancement of economic activities through creation of markets; provision of health facilities; creation of efficient agricultural sector, leadership development, neighbourhood revitalization, job training or education, public policy advocacy, child care, mentoring and community organizing.

Women contribution to community development activities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria has resulted to the formation of many women groups and organizations in the area. In the past, women in the local government area are mostly trusted with child bearing and caring. A women's contribution in a community is greatly related to the number of worthy children she has brought up in the community. With the formation of women organisation, some of the problems affecting them and their communities are addressed collectively, rather than as individuals. This study therefore looks at the roles of women organizations in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria played in community development activities.

Statement of the problem

It is a common and accepted norm in the Nigerian society that, it is the responsibility for government to provide basic amenities for the populace. Government has been trying to provide these amenities to various communities;

which includes the provision of road networks, educational institutions, electricity, and building of markets, among others.

Experience however shows that although government on her part has been trying to provide some forms of amenities to the various communities. Human needs are insatiable and the government alone cannot meet all these needs. More so, the vastness of the local government area conspicuously reveals that the government alone cannot salvage the life of the people nor adequately address the developmental needs of the area.

Hence there is need for the people to form themselves into organisations or associations to articulate their views, identify their felt needs and initiate move towards the realisation of such identified needs. Women have taken greater stride in community development efforts by forming themselves into organisations.

This study therefore seeks to investigate and analyse the roles of women organisations in community development programmes in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Assessment of the roles hopes to provide possible workable solutions that will encourage more active participation of women organisations in community development activities and bring about improved better living conditions from whatever project they embarked upon. This is the problem which the study addresses upon. And this is the thrust of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the roles of women organisations in community development activities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the influence of women organizations' activities on provision of health facilities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria;
2. Determine the influence of women organizations' activities on provision of educational facilities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria; and
3. Ascertain the influence of women organizations' activities on communal farming in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the contributions of woman organizations towards the provision of health facilities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria?



2. What are the contributions of women organizations towards the provision of educational facilities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria?
3. What are the roles of women organizations activities in communal farming in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

To facilitate the investigation of the problem of this study, three null hypotheses were postulated and tested at the at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of members of women organisations regarding the contributions of women organizations in providing health facilities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of members of women organisations from regarding the Ikwerre of women organizations in providing educational facilities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of members of women organisations from regarding the contribution's women organizations in communal farming activities in local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Methodology

The research study adopted for this study is descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 10,150 women who are members of women organizations in the Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The choice of this population was aimed at eliciting their perception of their participation in community development activities. The sample consisted of 385 respondents gotten through Yaro Yarmen formula and selected through simple random sampling technique. For the purpose of this study, the research instrument used to gather data was a questionnaire which was developed by the researchers to elicit information on women organisations and community development activities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State. The research instrument was pilot tested to get a test-retest statistical procedure which yielded a reliability index of 0.71 and content validity of 0.90 which is considered adequate for the research instrument.

All the statements were positively worded and scores of 1- 4 were awarded. The highest score of 4 being for high extent, 3 points for moderate extent, 2 points for low extent and 1 point for very low extent. The researchers administered the questionnaire to all the respondents and there was a 100% retrieval of the questionnaire. The responses were later analysed using descriptive statistics (mean

and standard deviation). To analyze the answers to the research questions, a criterion mean of 2.50 and above was used to ascertain the acceptance and a criterion mean of below 2.50 was used as a rejection of each item in the questionnaire. The null hypotheses were tested using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics to analyze the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The hypotheses were rejected if the computed value is greater than the critical table value at 0.5 level of significance, otherwise it is accepted.

Results

The results emanating from the data collected and analyze are presented in the tables below:

Research Question One: What are the contributions of women organization towards provision of health facilities in Ikwerre local Government Area of a Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Responses on contribution of women organisations in providing health facilities

S/ N	Item	M	S. D	R M K	M	S. D	R M K	M	S. D	R M K	M	S. D	R M K
1	Promotion of health development by building maternity homes, dispensaries clinics	2.95	1.02	A G	2.93	1.10	A G	2.97	0.95	A G	2.90	1.01	A G
2	Provision of drugs to Children and elderly	2.15	0.99	D A	1.84	0.99	D A	2.09	1.09	D A	2.05	0.97	D A
3	Organising seminars on HIV/AIDS and Other health related programmes	3.08	1.01	A G	2.97	0.94	A G	2.98	1.01	A G	2.84	1.05	A G
4	Payment of hospital Bill to the less privilege & physically challenged in the community	2.90	0.99	A G	3.03	1.00	A G	3.00	0.99	A G	2.88	1.04	A G
	Grand mean	2.77	1.00	A G	2.69	1.01	A G	2.76	1.01	A G	2.67	1.02	A G

Field Data

Table 1 shows the responses of the respondent regarding their role in providing health facilities for the development of their communities. As shown in the table, grand mean responses of 2.77, 2.69, 2.76 and 2.67 respectively. Furthermore, it shows women organisations in these s were involved in provision of health facilities in the study area. Standard deviations of 1.00, 1.01, 1.01 and 1.02

respectively. However, there was closeness or similarity in the responses of the women respondents regarding their contribution in provision of health facilities in the study area.

Research Question Two: What are the roles of women organizations in educational activities in Ikwerre local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean Responses on contribution of Women Providing Educational Facilities

S / N	Item	M	S. D	R M K	M	S. D	R M K	M	S. D	R M K	M	S. D	R M K
1	Provision of educational facilities such as pupils desks classroom blocks, staff chairs, tables.	2.99	0.94	A G	3.21	0.19	A G	3.08	1.03	A G	3.06	0.93	A G
2	Counseling pupils and students on proper child's behavior.	3.00	1.07	D A	2.91	1.03	D A	2.95	0.96	D A	3.01	0.93	D A
3	Provision of scholarship to exceptional children and orphans	2.97	1.06	A G	3.06	1.05	A G	2.91	1.01	A G	2.89	1.03	A G
4	Collaboration on security network in the school	2.05	1.08	A G	2.01	1.02	A G	1.08	0.93	A G	1.93	1.04	A G
	Grand mean	2.75	1.04	A G	2.81	1.06	A G	2.68	0.98	A G	2.72	0.98	A G

Field Data

Table 2 shows the responses of respondents regarding their contribution in providing educational facilities for the development of their communities. As shown in the table, grand mean responses of 2.75, 2.81, 2.68 and 2.72 respectively. Furthermore, the finding shows that women organization in the local government area were involved in provision of educational facilities in the study with the standard deviation of 1.04, 1.00, 0.98 respectively. However, there was closeness or similarity in the responses of the women respondents regarding their contribution in provision of educational facilities in the study area.

Research Question Three: What on contribution of women organization in communal farming activities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State.

Table 3: Mean Responses on contribution of women organisations in communal farming

S/ N	Item	M	S. D	R M K	M	S. D	R M K	M	S. D	R M K	M	S. D	R M K
1	Promotion of agriculture through communal works assistance.	2.99	1.02	A G	3.08	0.93	A G	3.17	0.88	A G	3.00	1.09	A G
2	Sponsoring government project	1.90	0.96	D A	2.10	0.99	D A	2.06	0.92	D A	2.09	1.00	D A
3	Provisions of loans and grants to the local farmers	2.94	1.05	A G	3.04	1.02	A G	2.77	1.11	A G	3.14	0.98	A G
4	Mobilizing other Women in the community for farming activities	3.07	0.98	A G	3.19	0.93	A G	3.06	0.95	A G	3.13	0.99	A G
	Grand mean	2.73	1.00	A G	2.85	0.97	A G	2.76	0.96	A G	2.84	1.01	A G

Field Data

Table 3 shows the responses of the respondents regarding their role in communal farming activities for the development of their communities. As shown in the table, grand mean responses of 2.73, 2.85, 2.76 and 2.84 respectively. Furthermore, it shows that women organisations in the local government area were involved in provision of communal farming activities in the area, with the standard deviations of 1.00, 0.97, 0.96 and 1.01 respectively. However, this indicates that there was closeness or similarly in the responses of the women respondents regarding their contribution in communal farming activities in the study area.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of members of women organisations regarding women organization in providing health facilities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State.

Table 4: Variance on provision of health facilities

Source of variations	SS	df	MS	Means				f.cal	f.crit	decision
Between groups	0.72	3	0.24	2.77	2.69	2.76	2.67	0.96	2.63	accepted
Within groups	95.17	38.1	0.25							
Total	95.89	384								

Field Data



Table 4 shows the analysis of variance in the mean responses of women from the members of women organisations in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria regarding them in provision of health facilities for the development of their communities. The result shows calculated F value of 0.96 at degrees of freedom of 3, 381 and critical F value of 2.63 at degrees of freedom of 3, 381. Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of members of women organisations from the local government regarding the contribution of women organization in providing health facilities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria was accepted: This means that there is similarity in the roles they play in providing health facilities in the four clans. This is also evident by mean values of 2.77, 2.69, 2.76 and 2.67 respectively for women organisations from the local government areas. These values show no much difference.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of members of women organisations regarding the provision of educational facilities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 5: Variance on provision of educational facilities

Source of variations	SS	df	MS	Means				f.cal	f.crit	decision
Between groups	0.88	3	0.29	2.75	2.81	2.68	2.72	1.22	2.63	accepted
Within groups	91.85	381	0.24							
Total	92.73	384								

Field Data

Table 5 shows the analysis of variance in the mean responses of women from women organisations from all parts of Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State regarding their role in providing educational facilities for the development of their communities. The result shows calculated F value of 1.22 at degrees of freedom of 3:381 and critical F value of 2.63 at degrees of freedom of 3, 381. Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean responses regarding the contribution of women organization in providing educational facilities in local government area of Rivers State was accepted. This means that there is similarity in the roles they play in providing educational facilities in the area. This is also evident by mean values of 2.75, 2.81, 2.68 and 2.72 respectively. And these values show no much difference.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of members of women organisations regarding the contributions of women organization in

communal farming activities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 6: Variance on provision of communal farming activities

Source of variations	SS	df	MS	Means				f.cal	f.crit	decision
Between groups	0.88	3	0.29	2.75	2.81	2.68	2.72	1.22	2.63	accepted
Within groups	91.85	381	0.24							
Total	92.73	384								

Field Data

Table 6 shows the analysis of variance in the mean responses regarding their contribution in communal farming activities for the development of their communities. The result shows calculated F value of 1.53 at degrees of freedom of 3, 381 and critical F value of 2.63 at degrees of freedom of 3, 381. Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean responses regarding the contributions of women organization in communal farming activities in Ikwerre local government area Rivers State, Nigeria was accepted. This means that there is similarity in the roles they play in communal farming activities in the local government area. This is also evident by mean values of 2.73, 2.85, 2.76 and 2.84 respectively. And these values show no much difference.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the analysis have revealed that women organizations contribute in providing health facilities in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The result shows that women organisations from area were involved in building maternity homes, health centres, dispensaries and clinics. They were also involved in organizing seminars on HIV/AIDS and other health related programmes. Furthermore, they involved themselves in payment of hospital bills to the less privileged and physically challenged in the communities. On the other hand, they were not much involved in provision of drugs to children and the elderly. The finding supports Nwachukwu and Asiabaka (2007) that women embark on community development projects such as health services.

This finding of this study corroborated the views of Eze (2013) that women were involved in awareness programmes on health-related issues which include: HIV/AIDS; pregnancy management, child delivery education; volunteers as administrators during immunization; donation of vehicles and canoes to ease logistics for health personnel. Furthermore, the finding is in tune with the position

of Odurukwu, Asiabaka, Ugwoku, Ehirim and Ejiogu-Okereke (2007) who found that women organisations were highly involved in renovating and furnishing town halls; renovation of school and church equipment; provision of grants/loans for women to open small business enterprises; awarding scholarships to school children; creating awareness on HIV/AIDS and provision of support toward health issues.

The finding of the study has it that women organisations were involved in providing educational activities such as pupils' desks, classroom blocks, staff chairs, and tables. They were also involved in counselling pupils and students on proper child's behaviour. Furthermore, they were involved in giving scholarship to exceptional children and orphans. On the other hand, they were not much involved in collaboration on security network in the schools. Since they are women, they might have thought that security matters should be the duties of men and government to deal with.

This finding corroborates Eze (2013) who asserted that women contributed greatly in providing stationary materials; tables; desks; chalks; blackboards; boarding schools; beds and training/retraining for teachers in schools in the locality. The finding supports Nwachukwu and Asiabaka (2007) that women embark on community development projects such as renovation of schools. It further corroborates Okwakpam and Eni (2012) that women award scholarships and assist in school renovation.

Furthermore, this finding is consistent with Abegunde (2009) assertion that community based organization enhance sustainable socio economic and physical developments of communities. On the contribution of women organizations in communal farming activities in the area, the result shows that they were involved in promoting agriculture through communal work assistance; provision of loans and grants to local farmers and mobilizing their women for farming activities. The result however shows that they were not much involved in participating in government projects.

Manuh (1998) agrees with this finding also, maintains that women provide the backbone of the rural economy in much of sub-Saharan Africa. About 80 per cent of the economically active female labour force is employed in agriculture and women comprise about 47% of the total agricultural labour force. Food production is the major activity of rural women and their responsibilities and labour inputs often exceed those of men in most areas in Africa. Women also provide much of the labour for men's cultivation of export crops, from which women derive little direct benefit.

This result further lends credence to the assertion of Manuh in Okwakpam and Eni (2012) that women provide the backbone of the rural economy in sub-Saharan Africa when he stated that about 80 per cent of the economically active female labour force are employed in agriculture and women comprise about 47 per cent of the total agricultural labour force. Food production is the major activity of rural women and their responsibilities and labour inputs often exceed those of men

in most areas in Africa. Women also provide much of the labour for men's cultivation of export crops, from which women derive little direct benefit.

This result agrees with Eze (2013) that women were greatly involved in organizing workshops and seminars enable community members acquire skills in poultry farming and fish farming. This research finding is in agreement with the findings of Maidugu (2004), who also established that women contribute to the development of Nigeria by embarking greatly on agriculture, as they play great role in food production and agriculture through bush clearing, planting, weeding, harvesting, food processing and preservation. Women constitute about 70% of the agricultural labour force, participating more than men in various stages of agriculture.

Conclusion

The findings of the study established that women organisations play active roles in community development activities in Ikwerre local government of Rivers State, Nigeria. The null hypotheses show there is no significant difference in the mean responses regarding the contributions of women organization in community development activities Ikwerre local government area Rivers State, Nigeria, hence the hypotheses were accepted.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

1. The governments (local, state and federal) should give matching grants and adequate funding to women organisations that are involved in community development activities.
2. There is the need for sensitization of women organizations' activities in the area.
3. The government should provide agricultural inputs to women in the area.***

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