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University of Uyo, Uyo,
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E-mail: agrifoodenv@yahoo.com***

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**MOTIVATIONS FOR BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION IN WOMEN
NGO ACTIVITIES IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA**

Akpabio, I. A¹ and Ebong, M. V².

ABSTRACT

Akpabio I. A. and Ebog, M. V. 2006. Motivations for beneficiary participation in women NGO activities in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Nigerian. Nigerian Journal of Agriculture Food and Environment. 3 (1&2): 46 – 51.

The study was conceived to ascertain factors that motivate women non-government organization (WNGOs) beneficiaries in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, to participate in the activities of WNGOs to which their Local Women Groups (LWGs) are affiliated. A sample size of 120 respondents from 24 LWGs, which are affiliated to three active WNGOs in the study area, were utilized for the study. Results derived from both descriptive and inferential statistical analytical tools, revealed that WNGOs programmes beneficiaries' cut across a broad spectrum of rural women. It was also revealed that four of the six identified major factors exert significant influences on beneficiary participation in WNGOs activities. These are level of awareness of WNGOs programmes and activities, some level of beneficiaries, WNGOs objectives and leadership style. Recommendations are offered for enhanced WNGOs contribution to rural women empowerment activities.

Key words: *Women NGOs, Local Women Groups, motivation, participation, socio-economic characteristics.*

INTRODUCTION

Women make up about half of the worlds adult population and often contribute more than their due share to the society, yet their personalities, interests, ideas and activities have not received the attention commensurate with their energy in history. The advocacy for recognition of women's rights has assumed international dimensions of recent and gender equality has moved from the margin to the center of the development agenda (UNIFEM, 2002). In 1995, the Beijing Declaration endorsed a comprehensive platform for action that sought individual commitment to improve the conditions and rights of women and their communities worldwide. The Millennium Development Goal of 2000 also noted the centrality of gender equality to efforts to combat poverty and hunger and to stimulate truly sustainable development (Chen, et al., 2005). The FAO Gender and Development Plan of Action (2002-2007) has also stated that sustainable agricultural and rural development and food security cannot be achieved by efforts that exclude more than half of the rural population. While international bodies and governments enunciate laws and provide the enabling environment for women's integration into the national economy, women themselves have been aiding in the integration process by forming themselves into formal groups called Women Non-Governmental Organizations (WNGOs). WNGOs main targets are the women and the girl child. Their objectives are to fight for the emancipation of the female folk, try to raise their living standards and fight against gender inequality (Clark, 2004). In essence, WNGOs mobilize peasant women for the betterment of their means of livelihood through collective action, rather than concentrating on individualistic pursuits and looking up to government for solutions to their problems. WNGOs reach out to the rural women through already existing groups. This is in their bid to gain legitimacy and to help their groups to develop so that they eventually become self-sustaining (Mukute, 2002). A lot of WNGOs exist in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, against this background; this study was conceived to ascertain factors that motivate WNGOs beneficiaries to participate in the activities of WNGOs to which their local groups are affiliated. In specific terms, the study attempted to determine the socio-economic characteristics of WNGOs beneficiaries and also ascertained their motivation for participating in the activities of the specific WNGOs of their choice.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was undertaken in Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria, which is located in the southeastern axis of Nigeria. The state occupies a landmass of 8,421sq.kilometers and has a population of 2,359,736 (Nigerian population commission (NPC.,2000). The State's population density of about 350 persons per square kilometer is one of the highest in the country. It has been revealed that 80 percent of the population lives in the rural areas, more than half of which are women (NPC, 2000).

The sample frame for the study consisted of members of Local Women Groups (LWGs) that are affiliated to the 29 officially registered (with the Ministry of Women Affairs) WNGOs in the state. Three active WNGOs with statewide involvement in agricultural and rural development activities were purposefully selected for the

¹ Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, University of Uyo, P.M.B. 1017, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

² Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development Programmes, Abak Zone, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

study. These were: The Women Health and Economic Development Association (WHEDA), The W for Economic Empowerment (WUEE) and Our Ladies Development Center (OLADEC). A multi procedure was thereafter utilized to select 120 respondents from 24 LWGs affiliated to the WNGOs.

Table 1 Sampling Procedure

| WNGOs | Affiliated LWGs | Sampled Groups | No of Respondents |
|--------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| WHEDA | 36 | 8 | 40 |
| WUEE | 28 | 8 | 40 |
| OLADEC | 53 | 8 | 40 |
| TOTAL | 117 | 24 | 120 |

Source: Field survey, 2004

Data was generated with the aid of a pre-tested and validated structured questionnaire and from in-depth interview (IDI) sessions. Collated data were analyzed with the aid of descriptive (frequencies, percentages, means, ranks) and inferential (multiple regression) statistical tools. To determine factors affecting beneficiary participation in WNGOs activities, motivating factors were identified, respondents were thereafter requested to indicate their attitudinal disposition with the aid of a 3-point Likert continuum of Agreed (3) Undecided (2) and Disagree (1). A mean attitude score was thereafter computed for each motivation factor, after which a cut-off point of 2.0(1+2+3/3) was utilized to demarcate between the major factors ($x \geq 2.0$) and minor factors ($x < 2.0$).

Table 2 reveals that only 23.33 percent of the respondents were above 60 years of age, while 50 percent were married. About 67.50 percent of the respondents had a family size of between 1-6; only 25.83 percent had not acquired formal education while farming was the primary occupation of about 48.30 percent of the respondents. Table 2 also depicts that 45.00 percent of the respondents had affiliated with the WNGOs for a period of three years while 65 percent had benefited only once from WNGOs empowerment activities. It was also revealed that the proportion of respondents with income range of between ₦1000 and ₦10,000 per month had dropped to 16.67 percent, from a pre-WNGOs affiliation level of 65.84 percent. In summary, it may be deduced from the findings above that beneficiaries of WNGOs empowerment activities are women from various strata of rural life, majority of whom have affiliated for a period of about three years and have benefited only once from WNGOs credit facilities. This has translated into increased earnings from their economic activities.

Factors influencing beneficiary participation in WNGOs

Respondents revealed that 6 of the 10 identified factors positively influenced the participation of local groups membership in WNGOs activities. The three major factors were: level of awareness ($x = 2.40$), objectives of the organization ($x = 2.40$) and, group leadership and management style ($x = 2.40$). On a converse note, of the four perceived minor factors affecting beneficiary participation, the three least perceived factors included: occupation ($x = 1.28$), age ($x = 1.45$), and family size ($x = 1.56$) of the women beneficiaries. It has been stressed by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP, 1992) that a successful NGO that attracts local group patronage is one that has obtained recognition as a legitimate voice of the rural poor. This it does through a member driven agenda, based on the delivery of benefits that women and their families' value (Dikito-Wachtmeister, 2001) and outside recognition and legitimacy (IFAP1992). The above stated attributes result in a high level of awareness of WNGOs activities. IFAP (1992) also stressed that successful organizations have well defined organization goals and objectives. In essence, Stringfellow, et al., (1997) reveal that people will participate in WNGOs with a high level of technical capacity, which the organization uses to empower its affiliates through education and training. On leadership style, Bebbington et al (1994) and Thomas (1990) emphasize the necessity for a successful NGO to have strong leadership with adequate managerial and administrative skills. The entire above listed attributes, according to Hopley and Shah (1994) will ensure cooperative teamwork (rank no.5) and ultimate continuity of WNGOs and LWG activities. It is also perceived that the high volume of micro-credit advances (rank no. 4) granted to respondents is a sufficient motivation for beneficiary participation in WNGOs activities. This may seem reasonable in the short run, however in the long run, Gow and Vassant (1979) caution against a counter productive sense of dependence this trend may induce. Kaplan (1999) and de Klerk (2004) assert that such funds may turn out to serve mainly social (consumption and self aggrandizement) needs and rarely economic functions. This will ultimately expose beneficiaries to high level of defaults and consequent bad debts, and ultimately destroy the process of self-reliance. It is fervently hoped that WNGOs are aware of the implications of unlimited, unsecured credit advances on sustainable development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Socio-economic Characteristics of WNGOs Beneficiaries****Table 2: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents (n=120).**

| S/No | Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|---|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Age range (years) | | |
| | Less than 21 | 12 | 10.00 |
| | 21-40 | 41 | 34.17 |
| | 41-60 | 39 | 32.50 |
| 2 | More than 60 | 28 | 23.33 |
| | Marital status | | |
| | Married | 60 | 50.0 |
| | Single | 24 | 20.0 |
| 3 | Divorced | 6 | 5.0 |
| | Widowed | 30 | 25.0 |
| | Family size | | |
| | 1-3 | 37 | 30.83 |
| 4 | 4-6 | 44 | 36.67 |
| | 7-10 | 29 | 24.17 |
| | More than 10 | 10 | 8.33 |
| | Educational status | | |
| 5 | No formal education | 31 | 25.8 |
| | Primary | 45 | 37.5 |
| | Secondary | 32 | 26.7 |
| | Tertiary | 12 | 10.0 |
| 6 | Major occupation | | |
| | Farming | 58 | 48.30 |
| | Trading | 30 | 25.00 |
| | Civil service | 12 | 10.00 |
| 7 | Food processing | 20 | 10.70 |
| | Membership length (years) | | |
| | 1-3 | 54 | 45.00 |
| | 4-6 | 34 | 28.33 |
| 8 | 7-9 | 20 | 16.67 |
| | 10 and above | 12 | 10.00 |
| | Frequency of Benefits | | |
| | Once | 78 | 65.00 |
| 9 | Twice | 32 | 26.67 |
| | Thrice | 7 | 5.83 |
| | ≥ 4 times | 3 | 2.50 |
| | Monthly earnings before WNGOs affiliation | | |
| 10 | 5000 | 26 | 21.67 |
| | 5000-10000 | 53 | 44.17 |
| | 10000-15000 | 31 | 25.83 |
| | 15000-20000 | 10 | 8.33 |
| | >20000 | - | - |
| 11 | Monthly earnings after WNGOs affiliation | | |
| | 5000 | 3 | 2.50 |
| | 5000-10000 | 17 | 14.17 |
| | 10000-15000 | 44 | 36.67 |
| | 15000-20000 | 34 | 28.33 |
| >20000 | 22 | 18.33 | |

Table 3: Factors Influencing Beneficiary Participation in WNGOs Activities

| Factors | Response Options | | | Mean | Rank | Remarks |
|----------------------------------|------------------|------------|------------|------|------|---------|
| | Agreed | Un-decided | Dis-agreed | | | |
| Level of awareness | 74(61.7)* | 34 (28.3) | 12 (10.0) | 2.52 | 1 | Ma.F |
| Income level of respondents | 50 (41.7) | 43 (35.8) | 27 (22.5) | 2.19 | 6 | Ma.F |
| Age of respondents | 12 (10.0) | 30 (25.0) | 78 (65.0) | 1.45 | 10 | Mi.F |
| Family size of respondents | 18 (15.0) | 31 (25.8) | 71 (59.2) | 1.56 | 9 | Mi.F |
| Volume of credit facilities | 58 (48.3) | 42 (34.9) | 20 (16.7) | 2.32 | 4 | Ma.F |
| Objectives of focal WNGO | 69 (57.5) | 29 (24.2) | 22 (18.3) | 2.40 | 2 | Ma.F |
| Educational level of respondents | 19 (15.8) | 39 (32.5) | 62 (51.7) | 1.64 | 8 | Mi.F |
| Occupation of respondents | 8 (6.7) | 17 (14.2) | 95 (79.2) | 1.28 | 11 | Mi.F |
| Age of LWG | 20 (16.7) | 39 (35.5) | 61 (50.8) | 1.66 | 7 | Mi.F |
| Level of teamwork in LWG | 28 (23.3) | 44 (36.5) | 48 (40.0) | 2.20 | 5 | Ma.F |
| Leadership / management style | 65 (54.2) | 37 (30.8) | 18 (15.0) | 2.40 | 2 | Ma.F |

Source: Field survey, 2004

Boyd (2006) reports that a fifth of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh's loan advances in 2001, were more than a year due. In this regard, the writer accuses the bank of giving new loans and accumulating interests, simply to keep alive the fiction of repayment of old loans. Increased self reliance has been described (de Klerk 2004) as a legitimate goal for income generation activities. Against this background, the World Bank (1996) declared that the most successful groups which can make an impact on rural development are the ones in which a large proportion of lending capital is raised from membership savings. Mukute (2002) revealed that WNGOs motivation to work with LWGs is to help them develop so that they can eventually become self-sustainable. It is fervently hoped that the ultimate aim of the WNGOs is to empower LWGs to become self-sustainable for qualitative inputs into the rural development process.

Age, occupation and family size of respondents were not perceived as major factors affecting participation in the study area. Reddy and Horton (1973) had surmised that participation reaches a peak in the 40-55 years age range, while Akpabio (2000) revealed that middle-aged members predominate in Akwa-Ibom rural cooperatives. Ekong (2003) in deference to the above stated assertions opine that age is even more important than education with regards to the issue of participation in the rural areas. With reference to occupation, Chen, et al (2005) had proffered that one of the most important ways of workers in the informal economy (to which majority of respondents belong) to counter the forces that contribute to their impoverishment is through organization (into groups). Regardless of the above stated opinions, reasons for the non-significant status of the above stated factors to beneficiary participation in WNGOs need to be explained. It may be noted that those respondents' ages and family sizes were relatively evenly distributed across the various age and family ranges while all respondents had agricultural production as either a major or minor occupation. In other words, WNGOs cater for all spectrums of indigent women irrespective of age, occupation or family size.

Significant factors affecting beneficiary participation

An attempt was made to identify significant factors that affect local groups members' participation in WNGOs activities. Multiple regression analysis (table 4) reveals that four of the six major variables significantly influence beneficiary participation. These are income level ($b = 0.528$), WNGOs objectives ($b=0.409$), leadership style ($b = -0.159$), and awareness level ($b = 0.879$). In essence, with regards to significant predictors of beneficiary participation in WNGOs activities in the study area, it may be inferred that people are motivated to participate in the activities of recognized, viable WNGOs, which are characterized by responsible management/ leadership structures and are involved in activities that meet the needs of low-income individuals in a community. With reference to income level, a related result had revealed that pre-participation income level for 65 percent respondents was less than #10,000 per month. In essence, income level is quite low for a generality of respondents. Akpabio (2000) had revealed that lower status individuals participate more in local organizational activities, ostensibly with the expectation, to fulfill some social, psychological and /or economic desire. Chen, et al (2005) had asserted that women in the informal economy attempt to counter their impoverishment through organizing. In the same vein, Jibowo (1992) averred that lower status individuals participate in group activities, because of their willingness to explore the values of cooperation after several years of working alone without returns. According to him, people are also aware of the success story of cooperative groups in other segments of society and are desirous of replicating such in their environment. With regards to leadership style, it had earlier been revealed that strong leadership with adequate managerial and administrative skills would ensure effective coordination, cooperative teamwork and ultimate continuity of WNGOs and LWG activities.

Table 4: Significant Factors Influencing Beneficiary Participation in WNGOs Activities

| Variables | B | t - Ratios | P - Value |
|-------------------|-------|------------|-----------|
| Constant | -.939 | -.465 | .643 |
| Awareness | .879 | 2.161* | .033 |
| Income | .528 | 3.458** | .000 |
| Credit Facilities | .413 | 1.148 | .253 |
| Objectives | .409 | 1.990** | .003 |
| Teamwork | .401 | 1.175 | .242 |
| Leadership style | -.159 | 2.131** | .002 |

* (P<0.05)

** (P<0.01)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Women NGOs focus on the empowerment of women and the girl-child, for qualitative sustainable inputs into community and national development activities. Some WNGOs are however thinly spread with low membership, while others are widely spread and attract a large membership through the LWGs to which beneficiaries affiliate. This study was conceived to identify the socio-economic attributes of WNGOs beneficiaries and to ascertain determinant factors that motivate such membership participation in the activities of successful WNGOs. Findings reveal that WNGOs programme beneficiaries cut across a broad spectrum of the rural women population. Majority of the beneficiaries were also revealed to have affiliated with the WNGOs, through their various LWGs, for about a three-year period, during which they had benefited only once from WNGOs credit facilities. The relationship was revealed to have translated into increased earnings from beneficiaries' income generation activities. It was also revealed that four major factors significantly affect beneficiary participation in WNGOs activities. These are: level of awareness of WNGOs programmes and activities, income level of beneficiaries, WNGOs objectives and WNGOs leadership style. Arising from the findings above, the following recommendations are proffered:

- 1, WNGOs should embark on awareness raising campaigns on their activities/achievement, so that more LWGs can register and benefit from their empowerment activities,
- 2, Empowerment activities of WNGOs should not just end at granting of credit facilities but should also ensure that the loan facilities are well utilized to ultimately assist the LWGs to become self-sustaining,
- 3, WNGOs should embark on capacity building activities for LWGs in areas of leadership and management skills development and on the identification and utilization of economic opportunities in their environment, for self-sustenance,
- 4, Governmental authorities should embark on capacity building activities for WNGOs on how to utilize participatory approaches to identify the felt needs of LWGs affiliates, in order to tailor their objectives to coincide with such needs.

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