



Assessment of Women Organizations' Involvement in Community Development Process among the Okrika People of Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the involvement of women organizations in community development process among the Okrika people of Rivers State. To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher formulated five (5) objectives, 5 research questions and 5 hypotheses to guide the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the design of the study. The population of this study consist all the executives and members of registered Community Base Women Organizations (CBWO) in Okrika Metropolis, with total population size of 2, 210 women. The sample of the study was 663 respondents, 72 executives and 591 members were proportionately sampled from the population. The instrument used for data collection is self-structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by the research supervisor and two other experts in the Department of Adult Education and Community Development, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University. In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach Alpha was used because the instruments were in sections and were one time administered to 20 youths in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area who were not part of the study respondents. The reliability coefficient for skill acquisition programmes of Shell Petroleum Development Company and youth socio-economic empowerment were 0.72, 0.92, 0.65, 0.86 and 0.80 respectively The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using z-test statistical tool at a significance level of 0.05. The study revealed that women organizations involve in community need identification activities, women organizations involve in community projects planning, women organizations involve in community project implementation, women organizations involve in self-help projects and women organizations involve in monitoring and evaluation of community project have positive and significant impact among the Okrika people of Rivers State. The study recommends that Government should train the women on skill development hence it helps women organizations involved in community need identification activities, government through community ladders should organize seminar programme for women organizations on community projects planning and financing and non-governmental organizations should organize awareness campaign on how to be involved in community project implementation

Keywords: Women; Organization; Community; Development; Process; Okirika; Rivers State

INTRODUCTION

Across countries, women have created innovative, comprehensive programs to meet the needs of their communities. Women have established themselves as leaders in the community development process and acquire the skills that have brought positive changes to their communities. As effective builders of social capital, women organization play key roles in establishing and maintaining important relationships and networks in their communities.

They are facing the challenges of racial, culture, economic and political barriers that exist in the community development process and in many cases overcoming those barriers become their motivation. While their comprehensive approach has influenced the evolution of the community development field, women's organization contributions have been neither widely acknowledged nor explicitly credited. The result of the women groups or organization in community development study provide deeper insights into women's thinking about community development, the barriers they perceive to women's leadership and the kind of efforts that should be made to facilitate and promote their status and roles in the field. Women organizations or groups demonstrate variety of effective ways women create social capital that is central to the existence of healthy communities. In fact, the contributions of women organization in community development projects can bring about significant positive changes. Thus, women organizations have been proved to be one of the effective entry points for initiating activities or development projects in the community that are beneficiary to all the members of the community (Chiwendu, 2020). According to Khindula (2011), women are involved in all the stages of community development process beginning from the identification of felt needs, down to execution and evaluation of projects. They carry out enlightenment programs for government policies in tracking their members, the value of family child care and home economics.

Over the years, government has been making several attempts to meet the inelastic needs of communities with their limited resources, but this has not been efficacious. Hence, community development according to Eze (2019), is one of the alternative vehicles for the positive transformation of societies. Mere (2012) also emphasized that community development is an instrument of social betterment and upliftment of communities. Also, the United

Nations in 1956 gave a definition of community development which is now accepted worldwide. According to them, it is a “process by which the efforts of the people are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and enable them to contribute fully to the national progress” (Khindula, 2011).

Considering these viewpoints, there is need for assistance from other bodies to supplement the effort of the government to encourage better life pattern for members of the society. It is based on this that women organize themselves in groups for help activities in towns and village. Women are involved in all the stages of community development process beginning from the identification of felt needs, down to execution and evaluation of projects. They carry out enlightenment programs for government policies in tracking their members, the value of family child care and home economics. Most importantly, they assist extension workers to penetrate into the women folk of the community.

Through group efforts, women have tried to introduce the understanding of changes taking place in the society at large and how to cope with the challenges brought about by such changes. They promote religious belief, the care of motherless and abandoned children, the care of destitute, promotion of modern home management, encouragement of education at nursery and primary school level, day care centres, etc. these women could be co-operative, self-help groups, welfare groups, church groups, collective and exchange work groups which are geared towards the economic, Social and political development.

The wisdom and determinant quality deposited in the women of Okrika community has gone a long way in development project. Just like any other community. Women group or organizations in Okrika has contributed immensely towards the development of their community. These women embark upon many physical projects like the building of shops and walling of the market, building of maternity, renting of canopies, etc. Infact, the important role they play in the social and economic development of Okrika and the society at large, cannot be over emphasized. As mothers of the home, they play critical roles in education and socialization of the children in teaching new trends of home management, maintenance of the body, environmental cleanliness and as well contributing to the physical development of the society. In any form their services are required; they are always willing to do so. No limit should be placed on what they can collectively constitute to community development because women constitute a powerful social class. However, the attempt by women to come together and work in such groupings has been hindered by several factors. Often times, the role of women in community development in Nigeria is perceived as secondary and most times, very inferior to that of men.

In our society, the factors militating against the women organization in community development, has caused a lot of economic, social and political setbacks. At times, the principal obstacle to the role of women in community development in Nigeria are not intentional, they are as a result of unexamined assumptions about women’s cares, interest, unquestioned over a time. Meanwhile, this study aims at an assessment of women organizations involvement in community development among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

Statement to the Problem

The cultural beliefs that the education of a woman ends in the kitchen, makes it almost impossible for males to see the immense contributions of women to the community development. For example, girls are taught to have low aspirations because there are so few opportunities portrayed as available to them. It is believed that men’s work is outside the home and women’s work is inside the home. For example we see women at home washing dishes, cooking, cleaning, yell at the children, takes care of babies, and does the shopping, while men are store keepers, house builders, storytellers, monks, preachers, fishermen, policemen, fighters, soldiers, adventurers, judges, farmers and pilots. They were also the king and the gods.

Within the traditional African society, women from almost all the ethnic group were excluded from performing certain activities, especially those that concern leadership and other hand and significant activities like construction works and clergy roles, these were considered as men’s domain. The exclusion of women from some of these activities are due to the socio-cultural factors constraining them from participating in activities that were considered to be exclusively for men (William, 2013).

The Limited role of women in community development has created a very big problem in our society. These problems have attracted the attention of various governments, writers and everyone concerned in enhancing development in Nigeria. Three decades ago, have witnessed hundreds of seminars, conferences and workshops tailored towards the promotion of the role of women in community development in Nigeria. The common practice today has been to mobilize scholars and professionals to present papers that identify the purposes and as well as proffer solutions to the innumerable problems hindering the role of women at all levels without actually investigating those factors

Lack of women involvement in community need identification activities, community projects planning and financing, community projects implementation, self-helps projects, and monitoring and evaluation of community projects. Lack of government interest in women organization towards community development projects has affected women organizations in different dimensions mainly in area of community development project.

Finally, laws and customs also impede women’s access to credit, productive inputs, employment, education, information and politics. These factors affect women’s organization’s ability and incentives to contribute in economic and social development activities in the community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the involvement of women organizations in community development process among the Okrika people of Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study sought to:

1. Examine the extent women organizations involved in community need identification activities among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

2. Determine the extent women organizations involved in community projects planning among the Okrika people of Rivers State.
3. Ascertain the extent women organizations involved in community project implementation among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The researcher developed the following research questions that guided the conduct of the study.

1. To what extent do women organizations involved in community need identification activities among the Okrika people of Rivers State?
2. To what extent do women organizations involved in community projects planning among the Okrika people of Rivers State?
3. To what extent do women organizations involved in community project implementation among the Okrika people of Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of women excos and members on extent women organizations involved in community need identification activities among the Okrika people of Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of women excos and members on extent women organizations involved in community projects planning and financing among the Okrika people of Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of women excos and members on extent women organizations involved in community project implementation among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

Research Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. Descriptive survey research is designed only to solve the existing condition but also it can be used for comparing features of a group. According to Nzeneri (2012), descriptive survey deals with what is happening at present and it handles situational problems as they are without manipulation of variables and also allows the research to make recommendations based on findings from the data collected and analysed. In addition, (Amirize 2011) states that in a descriptive survey design, a sample of population is used and this permits the generalization of results to the target population. This survey was appropriate for this study because, it enables the researcher to elicit or collect data from a sample of the population, and the outcome was generalized for the whole population.

The population of this study consist all members of the four (4) registered Community Base Women Organizations (CBWOs) in Okrika ethnic nationality with a total population size of 2, 210 women. Community Based Women Organizations (CBWO) are women organizations registered in the communities of the study area which address local needs of their members and the entire community. This study covers all the members of these organizations within the communities of Okrika

The sample of the study was 663 respondents, 72 executives and 591 members were proportionately sampled from the population. Thirty percent (30%) of the population of Registered members of women organizations in Okrika were proportionately drawn and studied as the sample are shown below:

Table 1: Population and sample of members of Registered community base women organizations (CBWOs) in Okrika Ethnic Nationality.

Women organization	Executives		Members	
	Population	Sample (30%)	Population	Sample (30%)
Kallo Women Organization	53	16	433	130
Ogoloma Women Organization	60	18	483	145
Okrika Women Organization	67	20	553	166
Ogan Women Organization	60	18	500	150
Total	240	72	1970	591

Source: Okrika Local government Council Records Unit (2022)

Research Question 1: To what extent do women organizations involved in community need identification activities among the Okrika people of Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent women organizations involved in community need identification activities among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

S/ No	Questionnaire Items	Women Excocs = 72			Members = 591		
		Mean \bar{x}	SD	Remarks	Mean \bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1.	Women come out en mass to deliberate on conditions that are deplorable	2.89	0.85	High Extent	2.95	0.86	High Extent
2.	Members of women community-based organizations participate in brainstorming sessions on better quality of lives of the people.	2.86	0.83	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
3.	Members of women of community-based organizations come out in town hall meetings to discuss community needs.	2.78	0.83	High Extent	2.91	0.85	High Extent
4.	Women organizations brainstorm on the need to buy land and donate to communities for community project.	2.83	0.84	High Extent	2.82	0.84	High Extent
5.	Women of community-based organizations sit together to level community needs identified.	2.86	0.84	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
6.	Women of community-based organizations come together to prioritize community needs identified.	2.89	0.85	High Extent	2.95	0.86	High Extent
Grand Total		2.85	0.84		2.89	0.85	

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The analysis in Table 2 above revealed that the respondents agreed on the view that women come out en mass to deliberate on conditions that are deplorable. The analysis still indicated that the respondents accepted on the point that women of community-based organizations participate in brainstorming sessions on better quality of lives of the people. It was also observed in the table that the respondents accepted the fact that women of community-based organizations come out in town hall meetings to discuss community needs. The table still showed that the respondents agreed on the view that women organizations buy land and donate to communities for community project. The analysis also revealed that the respondents agreed on the view that women of community-based organizations sit together to level community needs identified. The analysis also revealed that the respondents agreed on the view that women of community-based organizations come together to prioritize community needs identified

Research Question 2: To what extent do women organizations involved in community projects planning and financing among the Okrika people of Rivers State?

Table 3 Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent women organizations involved in community projects planning and financing among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

S/ No	Questionnaire Items	Women Excocs = 72			Members = 591		
		Mean \bar{x}	SD	Remarks	Mean \bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1.	Women of community-based organizations meet to brainstorm on alternatives to implementation of community project.	2.86	0.84	High Extent	2.91	0.85	High Extent
2.	Women of organizations come out to reason together on the best alternatives to implementation of projects.	2.83	0.84	High Extent	2.95	0.86	High Extent
3.	Women of community-based organizations consult professionals for implementation of community project.	2.97	0.86	High Extent	2.98	0.86	High Extent
4.	Women draw up costs of community projects.	2.94	0.86	High Extent	2.99	0.86	High Extent
5.	Women of community-based organizations draw up feasibility report and budgets.	2.97	0.86	High Extent	2.98	0.86	High Extent
6.	Women come together to contribute financially for community project.	2.92	0.85	High Extent	3.00	0.87	High Extent
Grand Total		2.90	0.85		2.97	0.86	

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The data analysis in Table 3 above indicated that the respondents accepted the point that women of community based organizations meet to brainstorm on alternatives to implementation of community project. The analysis also showed that the respondents agreed on the view that Women of

organizations come out to reason together on the best alternatives to implementation of projects. It was still noticed in the table that the respondents agreed on the fact that women of community-based organizations consult professionals for implementation of community project. The analysis also revealed that the respondents accepted the view that women draw up costs of community projects. The table indicated that the respondents agreed on the fact that women of community-based organizations draw up feasibility report and budgets. The table indicated that the respondents agreed on the fact that women come together to contribute financially for community project.

Research Question 3: To what extent do women organizations involved in community project implementation among the Okrika people of Rivers State?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent women organizations involved in community project implementation among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

S/ No	Questionnaire Items	Women ExcOs = 72			Members = 591		
		Mean \bar{X}	SD	Remarks	Mean \bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1.	Women of organizations come out to community project sites as moral boosters.	2.83	0.84	High Extent	2.91	0.85	High Extent
2.	Women come out to community project sites to participate in the work.	2.72	0.82	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
3.	Women of organizations come to community project sites to render assistance.	2.75	0.83	High Extent	2.93	0.85	High Extent
4.	Women come out to community project sites to encourage workers.	2.69	0.82	High Extent	2.95	0.86	High Extent
5.	Women of community-based organizations participate in mass mobilization campaigns and training sessions.	2.67	0.82	High Extent	2.87	0.85	High Extent
6.	Effective involvement of women organization in community project implementation contributes to community development.	2.68	2.75	0.83	Agreed	2.93	0.85
Grand Total		2.73	0.83		2.90	0.85	

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The analysis in Table 4 above showed that the respondents accepted the point that women of organizations come out to community project sites as moral boosters. The table still revealed that the respondents agreed that women come out to community project sites to participate in the work. It was also observed from the analysis that the respondents accepted the point that women of organizations come to community project sites to render assistance. The analysis still indicated that the respondents agreed on the view that women come out to community project sites to encourage workers. The table also showed that the respondents accepted the fact that women of community-based organizations participate in mass mobilization campaigns and training sessions. The analysis still indicated that the respondents agreed on the view that effective involvement of women organization in community project implementation contributes to community development.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the women excos and members on the extent women organizations involved in community need identification activities among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

Table 5: Z-test Analysis of significant difference in the mean responses of the women excos and members on the extent women organizations involved in community need identification activities among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

Status	N	Mean \bar{X}	Standard Deviation	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Women ExcOs	72	2.85	0.84	661	1.29	1.96	Accepted
Members	591	2.89	0.85				

The analysis on Table 5 revealed that the z-cal of 1.29 is less than the z-crit of 1.96. Therefore, the calculated z-ratio is not statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance since it is smaller than the given critical value of z-ratio. So, the hypothesis 1 is thus accepted and the conclusion is that there

is no significant difference in the mean responses of the women excos and members on the extent women organizations involve in community need identification activities among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the women excos and members on the extent women organizations involved in community projects planning and financing among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

Table 6: Z-test Analysis of significant difference in the mean responses of the women excos and members on the extent women organizations involved in community projects planning and financing among the Okrika people of Rivers State

Status	N	Mean X	Standard Deviation	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Women Excocs	72	2.90	0.85	661	1.24	1.96	Accepted
Members	591	2.97	0.86				

The analysis on Table 6 indicated that the z-cal of 1.24 is less than the z-crit of 1.96. Therefore, the calculated z-ratio is not statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance since it is less than the given critical value of z-ratio. Therefore, the hypothesis 2 is thus accepted and the conclusion is that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of the women excos and members on the extent women organizations involve in community projects planning and financing among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the women excos and members on the extent women organizations involved in community project implementation among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

Table 7: Z-test Analysis of significant difference in the mean responses of the women excos and members on the extent women organizations involved in community project implementation among the Okrika people of Rivers State

Status	N	Mean X	Standard Deviation	df.	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Women Excocs	72	2.73	0.83	661	1.39	1.96	Accepted
Members	591	2.90	0.85				

The analysis on Table 7 showed that the z-cal of 1.39 is less than the z-crit of 1.96. Therefore, the calculated z-ratio is not statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance since it is less than the given critical value of z-ratio. Therefore, the hypothesis 3 is thus accepted and the conclusion is that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of the women excos and members on the extent women organizations involved in community project implementation among the Okrika people of Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study in research question one: To what extent do women organizations involved in community need identification activities among the Okrika people of Rivers State revealed that women organizations involve positively in community need identification activities among the Okrika people of Rivers State to a high extent. This finding is in collaboration with Gamage (2014), who observed that women come out in mass to deliberate on conditions that are deplorable. The analysis still indicated that the respondents accepted on the point that women of community based organizations participate in brainstorming sessions on better quality of lives of the people. It was also observed in the table that the respondents accepted the fact that women of community based organizations come out in town hall meetings to discuss community needs. The study still showed that the respondents agreed on the view that women organizations buy land and donate to communities for community project. The analysis also revealed that the respondents agreed on the view that women of community-based organizations sit together to level community needs identified. The analysis also revealed that the respondents agreed on the view that women of community-based organizations come together to prioritize community needs identified. The study in Research Questions two: To what extent do women organizations involve in community projects planning and financing among the Okrika people of Rivers State indicated that women organizations involve significantly in community projects planning and financing among the Okrika people of Rivers State to a high extent. This study is in the same view with the Gastman (2019) who noted that women of community-based organizations meet to brainstorm on alternatives to implementation of community project. The analysis also showed that the respondents agreed on the view that Women of organizations come out to reason together on the best alternatives to implementation of projects. It was still noticed in the study that the respondents agreed on the fact that women of community-based organizations consult professionals for implementation of community project. The analysis also revealed that the respondents accepted the view that women draw up costs of community projects. The study indicated that the respondents agreed on the fact that women of community-based organizations draw up feasibility report and budgets. The analysis indicated that the respondents agreed on the fact that women come together to contribute financially for community project.

The findings of the study in Research Question three: To what extent do women organizations involve in community project implementation among the Okrika people of Rivers State showed that women organizations involve positively in community project implementation among the Okrika people of Rivers State to a high extent. The findings is in the same view with Deeprise (2014) who noted that women of organizations come out to community project sites as moral boosters. The study still revealed that the respondents agreed that women come out to community project sites to participate in the

work. It was also observed from the analysis that the respondents accepted the point that women of organizations come to community project sites to render assistance. The analysis still indicated that the respondents agreed on the view that women come out to community project sites to encourage workers. The study also showed that the respondents accepted the fact that women of community-based organizations participate in mass mobilization campaigns and training sessions. The analysis still indicated that the respondents agreed on the view that effective involvement of women organization in community project implementation contributes to community development.

Conclusion

Assessment of the involvement of women organizations in community development among the Okrika people of Rivers State cannot be over emphasis. However, the researcher concludes women organizations involve in community need identification activities, women organizations involve in community projects planning, women organizations involve in community project implementation, women organizations involve in community projects implementation and women organizations involve in monitoring and evaluation of community project have positive and significant impact among the Okrika people of Rivers State. The study still deduced that Women organization is an association of Women who have come together for their own interest and that of their community. Women organization can be found in different levels or areas across the world. It can be found in the villages, towns or at the state and national levels and that women have been major participants in community organizations. Women build social capital through leadership, community participation, and network

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made to ensure that the study meet its objectives.

1. Government should train the women on skill development hence it helps women organizations involved in community need identification activities.
2. Government through community ladders should organize seminar programme for women organizations on community projects planning and financing.
3. Non-governmental organizations should organize awareness campaign on how to be involved in community project implementation

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