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**Original article**

**Women participation in agriculture and rural development activities in bengaje community of Sokoto state, Nigeria**

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ABSTRACT

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The study was conducted to identify and assess the various community development programmes designed and implemented by Sokoto Agricultural and Community Development Project (SACDP) with the assistance of international funds for Agricultural Development (IFAD) among women participants in Bengaje Community of Sokoto State. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select 20 project participants in the village. Structured questionnaire, descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages and also participatory methodology such as focus group discussion and pair wise ranking were used to analyze the data. Results show that majority of the participants (75%) are married and undertook animal rearing as their major occupation. Results further showed that (85%) of the participants were involved in decision making, which enhanced their participation. Pair-wise ranking showed mosque completion as the most preferred activity, followed by community development workers. Recommendations made in the light of achieving people's participation include; provision of more infrastructural facilities (e.g construction of mosque), provision of improved breeds, credit and income generating activities.

## 1. Introduction

The historical mainstay of many of the world's viable agro-ecological system has been women. The relationship between women and the environment revolves around their concerns for providing family food security, fuel, water, and health care (Popin, 1994). Reference is made to sub-saharan Africa or the Caribbean, where women produce 6-80 percent of the supply of basic foodstuffs, or to the Indian subcontinent where between 70 and 80 percent for basic food crops grown are produced by women, via Asia where they perform over 50 percent of the labour involved in intensive rice cultivation, or to Indonesia or Central and South America, where their home gardens present some of the most complex agro-silvopastoral system known, women hold a vast amount of responsibility for, and knowledge of sustainable agricultural system (FAO, 1992).

According to FAO (1994) rural women constitute more than a quarter of the world's population, and are dually vulnerable group. Almost three quarters of the poor across the world live in rural areas, and women form the majority. The status and role of rural women is thus crucial, given their numerical strength and decisiveness. In Nigeria like many other developing countries, the role of women in the national development has begun to attract attention in recent years. Nigeria faces enormous challenges to improve food security, provide employment and ensure that women are mainstreamed into economic activities. Similarly, there is increasing realization of the critical role of women in agriculture and food production and of the fact that the empowerment of women is necessary for bringing about sustainable development at a faster pace. Notable among these, are limited access to land and capital, credit, agricultural inputs, education and appropriate technology. Carr (1984) observed that since the supplanting of the traditional barter system by cash economic, rural women have found it increasingly difficult to satisfy their cash needs, more so, as their hold on cash income is eroded by their displacement from their traditional income-earning activities. Such indigenous enterprises include clay pot-making, cloth weaving, cloth dyeing, palm oil processing, "gari" processing and local beer distilling. These activities used to provide not only employment to the women but also formed good linkages with the farm that enhance rural income and growth. The recognition of the role women play in agriculture and rural economics is fundamental to agricultural and rural development in sub-Sahara Africa. More importantly, recognizing and supporting this role economic potential (Booth and Protais, 1999). Rural women's productive contributions tend to be undermined and even more difficult to carry out due to high population pressure, high agricultural densities, and high dependency ratios, low labour productivity, natural resource base. In particular, levels of time and human energy inputs required in women's farm and home-based productive and reproductive chores are rising (Popin, 1994).

The general objective of this paper is to assess the effect of Sokoto Agricultural and Community Development (SACDP) on women participants.

## 2. Materials and methods

The study was conducted in Bengaje Community of Sokoto State, Nigeria. Located between longitudes  $11^{\circ}30'$  to  $13^{\circ}30'$  N and latitude  $4^{\circ}$  to  $6^{\circ}40'$  E. It is bordered by Niger Republic to the north, Zamfara state to the east and Kebbi state to the south and west (Sokoto State Diary, 1991). The state has total land area of 36,200.86 square kilometers with a population of 4,392,391 (NPC, 2006). The vegetation is typically Sudan Savannah or grassland characterized by a long dry season and short rainfall season with the mean annual rainfall of 500 to 1.300mm (sokoto diary, 1991). Simple random sampling was employed to select 20 project participants from the village from the list obtained from SACDP office for the discussion, structured questionnaire; focus group discussion and pair-wise ranking were used for generating data. Focus group discussion was used to identify the programme and activities executed by SACDP/IFAD in the community. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to describe the demography characteristics and the level of involvement and participation of the beneficiaries. Pair-wise ranking was used to prioritize or rank the programmes preferred by the community.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Results in Table 1 shows that (55%) of participants were above the age of 35 years and (75%) were married. This is an indication that majority of the participants were within productive age and that married women participated in the programme more than the unmarried. Fabiyi et al., (2007) also found that most rural women that participated in agricultural programme in Billiri Local Government Area of Gombe State were married. The distribution of the participants based on their level of education (Table 1) shows that majority (75%) had no formal education, while 25% had western education. A high level of illiteracy characterized the women who participated in the study. It is incontrovertible that education has a positive effect on the adoption of innovations, which is an important factor of rural development. Pretty (1995) reported that majority (60%) of illiterate people in the third world are women. The results of this study and global situation are compelling reasons to intensify effort to accelerate the education of women if rural development would be accorded the emphasis required to protect the sanctity of the nation, preserve the liberty of the citizenry and facilitate the pursuit of prosperity at all levels. High illiteracy and low enrolment rate, especially in secondary school affect women's ability to acquire skills needed for income generating activities and will have repercussion for generations to come (CTA, 2000). Majority of the participants (55%) had animal rearing as their occupation, 35% were involved in crop processing activities, while 10% were engaged in various trading activities. Reardon et al., (1998) argued that the first stage rural economics are characterized by activities that are closely linked to agriculture, either in terms of live stock production, input supply and services or crop processing and distribution. The finding agrees with that of Panin, (1993) who reported that sheep and goats are a profitable and reliable business in dry, hot desert and mountainous area of sub-Saharan Africa.

**Table 1**  
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants.

Variable	Frequency (N=20)	Percentage (%)
Age Group		
<18	1	5
18-24	3	15
25-30	3	15
31-35	2	10
>35	11	55
Marital Status		
Single	2	10
Married	15	75
Widowed	3	15
Level of Education		
No formal education	15	75
Adults	3	15
Primary	1	5
Secondary	1	5
Occupation		
Animal Rearing	11	55
Crop Processing	7	35
Trading	2	10

Source: field survey, 2006

### 3.2. Participation in SACDP/IFAD programmes

Results in Table 2 shows that majority of the participants (75%) were aware and participated in SACDP/IFAD programme in the past three to four years. The result also reveals that the major sources of information regarding agricultural and rural development programmes are personal contact with friends. Electronic media are also playing a significant role in providing information to the rural women, community development workers and other development agencies are also involved. This agrees with the findings of Odebode (2007) who observed that the

use of mass media was due to vigorous campaign to effectively mobilize the beneficiaries and gain the support of all stake holders through understanding the project objectives and implementation strategies. Anyanwu (1992) observed that success in the participation in community development were the effort of a local community which is supplemented or aroused by the government authority. Results of the present study further showed that majority of the participants (85%) were involved in the decision making. Involvement of people in decisions about their needs and aspirations is a way to achieve success in mobilizing people for any community action plan. Agboola (1990) observed that participation in activities that affects people is a basic need for all human beings, while Cohen (1997) noted that participation includes people' involvement in decision making processes and programmes evaluation.

**Table 2**

Distribution of participants based on levels of involvement and participation in SACDP/IFAD programme

Parameters	Frequency (N=20)	Percentage (%)
Years of awareness		
<2	2	10
3-4	15	75
5-6	3	15
Channel of awareness		
<2	4	20
3-4	9	45
5-6	7	15
Participation level (years)		
<2	2	10
3-4	15	75
5-6	3	15
Involvement in decision making		
Yes	17	85
No	3	15

Source: Field Survey, 2006.

### 3.3. SACDP/IFAD projects in bengaje community

Focus group discussion conducted shows a number of community development programmes that were executed in Bengaje Community. Among the programme executed include: Provision of Farm input, Women Skills Development, Provision of Improve breeds, Road network, Mosque completion, Provision of Dug well, Hand pump Repairs, Credit provision, Community Development Worker, Paravet services, Provision of Animal feeds.

### 3.4. Pair-wise ranking and matrix scoring

Result of pair-wise ranking conducted on the participants in order to have idea of the most important SACDP/IFAD programme executed in the area is presented in table 3. It indicated that the most important activities were mosque completion, which scored 10 and ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, community development worker scored 9 and ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, credit provision scored 8 and ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> while improved seeds scored 7 and ranked 4<sup>th</sup> respectively. The least important activities are dug well which scored one and ranked 8<sup>th</sup>. The preference for mosque completion by female participants is not surprising because mosque served as a worshipping center, followed by community development worker who played enormous role in creating awareness and enlightenment.

### 3.5. Conclusion

The ever changing global scenario demands for the improved programmes especially for the rural women to enhance agriculture and other economic activities. The project has resulted into meaningful improvement and transforming the individual and communal lives of the target communities. Mosque completion, Community development workers and Credit provision seems to be most successful project executed by SACDP/IFAD in the

area. The contribution of women to agricultural and rural development programmes should be maximized by providing solutions to the specific problems they encounter as economic and social stakeholders. Mobilization and enlightenment campaign should be re-enforced to adequately sensitize people on the need for participation in self-help activities. It is therefore necessary to particularly identify women as an integral part of the agricultural and community development policies and develop gender-specific operational guidelines which will direct the economic activities of rural women.

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**Table 3**

Pair-wise ranking and matrix scoring of the activities executed by SACDP/IFAD.

Farm Input	Women Skills Dev	Improve Breeds	Road Network	Mosque Completion	Dug Wells	Handpump Repairs	Credit Provision	Comm. Dev Workers	Paravet Services	Animal Feeds	Score	Rank	
-	Farm Input	Improve Breeds	Road Network	Mosque Completion	Farm Input	Farm Input	Credit Provision	Comm. Dev Workers	Paravet Services	Animal Feeds	Farm Input	3	6
-	-	Improve Breeds	Women Skills Dev	Mosque Completion	Women Skills Dev	Women Skills Dev	Credit Provision	Comm. Dev Workers	Paravet Services	Animal Feeds	Women Skills Dev	3	6
-	-	-	Improve Breeds	Mosque Completion	Improve Breeds	Improve Breeds	Credit Provision	Comm. Dev Workers	Improve Breeds	Improve Breeds	Improve Breeds	7	4
-	-	-	-	Mosque Completion	Dug Wells	Hand Pump Repairs	Credit Provision	Comm. Dev Workers	Road Network	Animal Feeds	Road Network	2	7
-	-	-	-	-	Mosque Completion	Mosque Completion	Mosque Completion	Mosque Completion	Mosque Completion	Mosque Completion	Mosque Completion	10	1
-	-	-	-	-	-	Hand Pump Repairs	Credit Provision	Comm. Dev Workers	Paravet Services	Animal Feeds	Dug Wells	1	8
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Credit Provision	Comm. Dev Workers	Paravet Services	Animal Feeds	Handpump Repairs	2	7
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Comm. Dev Workers	Credit Provision	Credit Provision	Credit Provision	8	3
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Comm. Dev Workers	Comm. Dev Worker	Comm. Dev Worker	Comm. Dev Worker	9	2
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Paravet Services	Paravet Services	5	5
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Animal Feeds	5	5