



## Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Farmers' Participation in Community Development Organizations in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria

SOCIAL – LES FACTEURS ECONOMIQUES INFLUENCANT LA PARTICIPATION DES ORGANISMES D'AGRICULTEURS POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT COMMUNAUTAIRE DANS LA ZONE DES ADMINISTRATIONS LOCALES D'OBUBRA DANS L'ETAT DE LA CROSS-RIVER, NIGERIA

Augustine O. Angba<sup>1,\*</sup>; Paul Itari<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Agricultural Economics & Extension, University of Calabar, Calabar, C.R.S., Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Adult & Continuing Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, C.R.S., Nigeria.

\* Correspondent Author

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### Abstract

This study was carried out to determine the factors that influence farmers' participation in social organizations in Obubra LGA in Cross River State. To achieve this, a multistage random sampling technique was used to select five out of 27 clans. Two local organizations were randomly selected from each of the five clans and finally 6 members were also randomly selected from each of the organization, resulting in a total of 60 respondents. The results indicate that half of the respondents (50%) were young people (below 30 years) and they were Majorly (93.3%) Christians who mostly cultivate small farm holdings of less than 2ha. Majority (68.3%) belonged to just one organization, while 20 percent belonged to two organizations. Majority (56.7%) also earned less than N4,000 per month. The members joined local organizations basically for economic benefits and farm supports. Their participation was affected by mutual distrust among members and lack of confidence in their leadership. They were also not sure of having expected organizational benefits. Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test result indicated a significant relationship between farm size, educational level, income and participation ( $P > 0.05$ ; 56.0, 9.623 and 7.607). Organizational environment that will encourage effective participation should be encouraged by ensuring due enforcement of organisation's code of conduct, rules and regulations. Local organizations should also be used as a channel to assist farmers in micro-credit and input delivery. This will be made possible by ensuring good organizational leadership.

**Key words:** Community; Development; Organization

and Participation

### Résumé

Cette étude a été réalisée afin de déterminer les facteurs qui influencent la participation des agriculteurs dans les organisations sociales dans l'Obubra à l'État de Cross River. Pour ce faire, une technique d'échantillonnage à plusieurs degrés au hasard a été utilisée pour sélectionner cinq des 27 clans. Deux organisations locales ont été choisies au hasard dans chacune des cinq clans et enfin 6 membres ont également été choisis au hasard dans chacune des organisation, résultant en un total de 60 répondants. Les résultats indiquent que la moitié des répondants (50%) étaient des jeunes (moins de 30 ans) et ils étaient la majorité (93,3%) qui pour la plupart chrétiens cultivent de petites exploitations agricoles de moins de 2 ha. La majorité (68,3) appartenait à une seule organisation, tandis que 20 pour cent appartiennent à deux organisations. La majorité (56,7%) ont également gagné moins de N4, 000 par mois. Les membres qui ont rejoint les organisations locales essentiellement pour des avantages économiques et des soutiens agricoles. Leur participation a été affectée par la méfiance mutuelle entre les membres et le manque de confiance en leurs chefs. Ils n'étaient pas non plus sûr d'avoir les avantages escomptés de l'organisation. Chi-caré résultat du test ( $\chi^2$ ) a montré une relation significative entre la taille des exploitations, le niveau d'instruction, le revenu et la participation ( $P > 0,05$ ; 56,0, 9,623 et 7,607). Environnement organisationnel qui encouragera la participation effective devrait être encouragée en veillant au respect du code en raison organisation de conduite, règles et règlements. Les organisations locales devraient aussi être utilisé comme un canal pour aider les agriculteurs dans la livraison de micro-crédit et d'intrants. Ce sera rendue possible en veillant à une bonne leadership organisationnel.

**Mots clés:** Communauté; Le développement; l'organisation et la participation

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## INTRODUCTION

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Community development organizations or self-help groups owned and controlled by the members and are aimed at rendering services for the mutual benefit of all members. Community development is seen as a move by the people to provide their basic needs through their own efforts and sometimes with external assistance. It is to this end that Community Development Organizations (CDOs) function. CDOs constitute an avenue through which a community fosters collective (social) efforts towards their development - borne out of the feelings that united local effort could provide a formidable force for the development of the community (Besette, 2004 and Mougeot, 2005). Therefore, the CDOs are seen as major or effective local instruments for effective community mobilization for development purpose. The idea of rural people participating in development projects which CDOs foster and promote have been variously acknowledged as most rewarding development strategy as the overcoming of obstacles of improved living condition frequently depends on well organised joint action in which the people take part both in planning and execution of the action. Local organizations are used by extension services as channels of reaching out to farmers to assist them adopt new agricultural technologies.

Farmers' participation will increase food production and consequently ensure food security. Local organizations constitute a major extension effort in enhancing the state of agriculture and the farmers. In view of this, it provides awareness and the platform for farmers' and also makes it possible for farmers to enjoy services, which hitherto were beyond their reach (Edet, 1982). Many organizations established in Cross River State adopt the methods of bringing farmers together so that they can also participate in planning, decision- making and implementation.

Dragon (2001) also posited that farmers' participation in local organization increase productivity and morale, hence effective goal setting and better utilization of human resources. It is in line with this, that he further said that participation reduces resistance to technology adoption, obtains commitments and increases the quality of decision-making. Buttell, (1994), also agreed that participation can enhance productivity at lower levels and gives power and opportunities to minority individuals.

A common agreement in the opinion of all the authors is the fact that participation such as enhancing democratic

values, mobilizing tapped resources and gaining insights. Murphy (2000) opined that working through a group or organization can often be more effective because being part of an organization legitimizes the views and actions of farmers. Development by the rural people, through increased participation in the views of Chibinga *et al* (1994) and Pomeroy (2006) is not possible unless social power is widely dispersed through the community. This dispersal enables people to influence the socio-economic and political functioning of the society which is a cornerstone of human development. This view of human development implies that people by right should have access to a variety of avenues for exercising power. Its logic suggests that participation is both a means and an end. The mechanism through which people may exert influence can vary widely in some way, as groups they can form. High levels of participation give natural expression to human capabilities and creativity and allow for the actualization and fulfilment of the group and the individual. With the advent of the need for growth in the agricultural sector, social units grew in size and became internally diversified and specialised. Farming activities and the living standards of the rural people can be enhance and promoted by social groups who have to face the consensus, the difference or the opposition of the rest of the people.

Spontaneous participation in the view of Dragon (2001) becomes an important test of confidence. In this context, people's participation is appreciated and sought by virtually all institutions; large or small. Despite the numerous benefits obtained from participating in group organizations, the rural people's level of participation significantly varies among individuals. However, in spite of the need and benefits of participation, several factors influence farmers' participation in organizations. Such socio-economic determinants are the major focus of this paper. Therefore, the study has the following specific objectives, to:

1. Determine the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers
2. Identify factors that influence farmers' participation in community organization
3. Ascertain the level of farmers' participation in community organization
4. Make recommendations on how to enhance participation.

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## STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESIS

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H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between identified socio-economic characteristics such as education, income, farm size and participation in social organizations.

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## METHODOLOGY

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### The Study Location

Obubra Local Government Area is located on latitude 5° 50' and 70 23' East and longitude 4° 60' and 4° 4' North. It is bounded by Ikum L.G.A in the North, Yakurr L.G.A in the East and in the South by Biase L.G.A. According to the 1991 population census, Obubra was said to have an estimated population of about 110,924. It consists of five clans namely Adun, Okum, Osopong, Ofunbongha and Yala. The land mass is about 1086.27 square kilometers (Obubra survey and planning office). It is a tropical rain forest zone. Farmers produce food cash crops such as cassava, maize, oil palm and yams.

### Sampling in Procedure and Sample Size

Simple random sampling technique was used to select five out of the 27 clans in the Local Government Area, Two Community Based Organizations (CBO) were randomly selected from each of the five clans. From each of the 10 organizations, 6 members were randomly selected. This resulted in a total of 60 respondents. Structured questionnaire that was tested and validated was used to elicit information from the respondents.

Selected organizations held a mandatory regular meeting once a month, outside emergency meetings.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the objectives, while chi-square was used to determine the degree of relationship between some identified socio-economic variables and farmers' level of involvement.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-Economic Characteristics

Table 1 shows that half (50%) of the respondents were young farmers of less than 30 years of age. Only 10 percent were above 50 years. Majority of the respondents (58.3%) were males. The educational attainments of the respondents show that 31.7% and 58.3% completed primary and secondary schools respectively. Only 1.7 percent had no formal education, while 8.3 percent had tertiary education.

The married respondents were more (58.3%). Virtually all the respondents (93.3%) were Christians except for a few (6.7%) who were traditional worshippers. Majority of the farmers (50%) cultivated very small holdings of less than 2ha, while 43% cultivated between 2-5ha. Majority of the respondents (56.7%) earned less than N4,000 per month, while only five percent earned more than N12,000 per month. The degree of cosmopolitanism which according to Ekong (2003) is defined as an individual's frequency of contact with the city was very low as about 18 percent of the respondents have never moved out to the nearest city, while about 40% had low level of cosmopolitanism. That is, must have been out to the city for less than five times in their life time.

Although participation in social organizations had been

traditionally measured by attendance, financial/material support and responsibilities, Ekong (2003) said that the intensity of farmers involvement in local organizations could also be determined by personal characteristics such as gender, income, educational status, marital status, occupation and age, although no causation is implied by the relationship.

**Table 1**  
**Showing Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents**

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
<30	30	50.0
30 - <40	16	26.7
40 - <50	8	13.3
50 and above	6	10.0
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	35	58.3
Female	25	41.7
<b>Educational Level</b>		
No formal education	1	1.7
Primary school	19	31.7
Secondary school	35	58.3
Tertiary	5	8.3
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	25	41.7
Married	35	58.3
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	56	93.3
Traditional worshippers	4	6.7
<b>Farm Size</b>		
<2ha	30	50.0
2-<5ha	26	43.3
Above 5ha	4	6.7
<b>Income (per/month)</b>		
Less than N4,000	34	56.7
N4,000- <N8,000	15	25.0
N8,000-<N12,000	8	13.3
N12,000 and Above	3	5.0
<b>Cosmopolitanism</b>		
High	7	11.7
Average	18	30.0
Low	24	40.0
Not at all	11	18.3

### Farmers' Participation in Social Organization

Table 2 indicates that 41.7% of the respondents attended

meetings regularly (9 or more times) in a year, while 28.3% attended 1-4 times in a year. The frequency of meetings in the organizations was basically once a month.

About 8.3 percent held multiple responsibilities in the organizations. Thirty percent agreed to render assistance voluntarily when required to do so, while 21.7% make personal voluntary financial donations apart from statutory levies/dues. Reasons for participation were mostly economic. The benefits of participations according to World Bank (1990) are associated with reasons for participation. When the benefits tend to meet the needs, reasons for members' participation becomes more effective. Bessete (2004) also stated that effective participation in local Organizations is directly related to the benefits derived from

the organization.

Table 2 also shows that the factors that militated against effective participation included poor confidence in leadership (66.7%), mutual distrust (58.3%) and not being sure to gain benefits. This result agrees with the findings of Edet (1982) reported that the major factors to be considered in ensuring successful and effective participation is that of checking members' antisocial behaviours. Participation is said to be made effective when some members do not hurt others participation. Troxel (1993) believes that some organizational leaders make participation effective so as to be able to enforce dictatorship on members. Such leaders believe that effective participation slows down decision-making.

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of Respondents by their Participation Social Organizations**

Frequency At Meetings/Year	Frequency	Percentage
1-4	17	28.30
5-8	18	30.0
9 and Above	25	41.7
No of organizational membership		
1	41	86.3
2.	12	20.0
3.	5	8.4
4 and above	2	3.4
Responsibilities/Personal Commitment		
None		13.3
One responsibility	16	26.7
Multiple responsibilities	45	8.3
Make financial donations	12	21.7
Render assistance voluntarily when required	18	30.0
Reasons for Participation		
To interact with others	8	13.3
To enjoy group benefits	25	41.7
To gain social/political recognition	15	25.0
Not to be left out	6	10.0
To have first hand information	18	30.0
For learning and self development	6	10.0
Factors Affecting Effective Participation		
Lack of time	6	10.0
Cost	16	26.7
Not sure of benefits	31	51.7
Not confidence in leadership/Leadership lapses	40	66.7
Mutual distrust among members	35	58.3
Other personal reasons	12	21.7

\* Multiple responses were allowed

### Level of Participation

Table 3 shows almost an equal distribution in the levels of participation. Those who had high participation were 33.3 percent and low participation was 36.7 percent. Each of the average and high numbers of participations do not meet two-thirds of the total respondents, which should form a *quorum*; therefore there is a need for improvement in respondents' level of participation.

**Table 3**  
**Distribution of Respondents by Their Level of Participation**

Score	Frequency	Percentage
Low	22	36.7
Average	18	30.0
High	20	33.3

**Table 4**  
**Summary of the Result of the Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) Test of Relationship between Some Socio-Economic Characteristics and Participation**

Variable	Df	Crit. Value	Obtained Value	Decision
Farm size	59	3.84	56	S
Educational level	59	3.84	9.6234	S
Income	59	3.84	7.607	S
Age	59	3.84	1.8	NS
Gender	59	3.84	0.67	NS

### Test of Hypothesis

Table 4 shows that there is a significant relationship between respondents' farm size cultivated, educational levels and income and their participation in social organizations ( $P < 0.05$ ; critical value = 3.84) at observed values of 56, 9.6234 and 7.607 respectively. This implies that farmers with large farm size, high educational level and high income tend to participate in social organizations more than those who were lower in these socio-economic characteristics. UNDP(2001) and Mougeot (2005), reported that participation in social organizations largely depends on the socio-economic status (SES) of rural people. Those with high SES tend to be more involved in local organization than those with low SES. However, age and gender were not significantly related to respondents' participation in local organizations. The implication of this is that the age and gender of respondents had no influence in their participation in local organization.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the results of the study, economic and social reasons were basic motivating factors for participation in social organizations. The farm size, educational level and income had significant effect on participation. This implies that the poorer and less educated farmers had lower level of participation. Consequently participation is a function of human behaviour, therefore to enhance participation in organization there is a need for the local farmers' adjustment in behaviour along socio - economic lines that can enhance inter-personal and group relationship in an organization. This can be better achieved by ensuring a proper organization code of conduct, discipline, leadership objectivity and compliance with organization rules and regulations.

It is also suggested that development programmes that will enhance participation should be developed and implemented taking respondents' differing socio-economic status into consideration.

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