



# The Place of Women in Community Development: A Review of Ikeduru Women

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## ABSTRACT

The paper analysed the role of women as individuals and organization in the development of rural communities in Ikeduru, a total of 450 questionnaires were administered and 350 was returned while the simple percentages was employed in the analysis of the data, the study revealed that the women of Ikeduru have over the years been involved with development strides aimed at developing Ikeduru and on these premise the paper recommend a wholistic support to the women as groups to motivate the generally for a greater height of developmental achievement.

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## Introduction

The most comprehensive perception of development is one that conceives a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structures, altitude and institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. Nigerian women are perceived as household property that join hand in economic activities of their families with regard to exchange in marriage, participation in agricultural activities and other areas that yield money (Azikiwe, 1992, Esere, 2001). In socio logical perspective, the modern days Nigerian women take part in important economic activities to the benefit of their families and the entire nation. Family is a basic social group, united through bonds of kinship or marriage. It is present in all societies. Ideally, the family provides its members with management engage mostly in trading, craft and distribution of goods which, in most cases, come from rural areas. Few of the urban women are importers and marketers of goods from other countries. This became necessary as a result of gradual decline in the Nigerian economy which led to mass retrenchment in the labor market, high cost of living accompanied by high inflation rate (Amali, 2007).

Rural development, is a process of not only increasing the level of per capital income in the rural areas but also of the standard of living depends on such factors as food, nutrition level, health, education, housing recreation and security. On the other hand, rural development is seen in terms of the condition and percentage of the labor force in the agricultural sector, although it is argued that a program of rural development should go beyond agriculture to include the country's total economic development in rural areas because about 70 percent of Nigerians labor force is employed in the agricultural sector, which is characterized by a predominance of small scale production using mostly local imputes.

Globally, woman's influence and contribution in the developmental process has become very significant to the

extent of drawing the attention of most authorities to a point of consideration and need to create equal opportunities between women and their male counterpart. Nigerian women have a recognized place in society which makes it possible for gifted ones among them to rise to positions of political, economic and social eminence from which they led and dominated not only their fellow women but men as well. Some scholars believe that women all over the world have contributed immensely to the development of states while others believe that women have contributed nothing rather than their domestic affairs such as family welfare, of which in the case of Nigeria women has contributed a lot towards a national development, hence this goes to show that the role of women in society cannot be over emphasized in the functions they perform. In the past women have been described as mothers of the nations, it is believed that many society hardly develop without women, generally, in Nigeria, there has been great apathy on the past of women and especially those from Ikeduru community of Imo state.

However, Nigerian women have involved themselves in developmental activities like politics, economy and social development since the independence. Notable women activist during pre-independent like late Mrs. Fumalayo Ramsome kuti, and of recent chief Mrs. Bola Bolatope, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, late Mrs. Kudurat Abiola, Dr Mrs. Jokumba Dosuma, Chief Mrs. Bosede oslin have distinguished themselves due to the roles they played in the emancipation of Nigeria women and the society at large. Therefore, this study examines the role of women in ensuring rural development focusing on Ikeduru local Government Area of Imo state, Nigeria.

Despite Significant improvement since attainments of independence in Nigeria like many nations in the developing world, extreme poverty remains wide-spread. This starts from the backwardness in education, lack of public separation, lack of finance, lack of representatives in government and lack of trust between leaders and followers. In spite of the above problems facing the

general development of rural areas within this period is seen as being at a cleaning rate. Nevertheless, the various women activities are noticed as being of importance to the development of the entire rural areas in Ikeduru. Hence this research work seeks to study the role played by women in the development of Ikeduru local Government Area.

There is need for a review of the work and opinions of some scholars on the role of women in rural development. To this end a couple of reviews have been presented below. According to Nwachukwu (2010), he defines development as an integral process of identifying opportunities for individual social groups and territorially organized communities at small and intermediate scale and mobilizing the full range of their capacities and resources for the common benefit in social, economic and political terms. He further argued that the specific types of development initiated by the political administrative elite are the most suitable one for all the other members of society and should therefore replace other existing nations of development. However, Nwachukwu sees women as a catalyst in the development process. He argued that women occupied a very important social, economic and political position in pre-colonial Nigeria. It is said that in all the main areas of economic activity such as agriculture, trade and manufacturing industries, women play outstanding roles. They are a major source of labour in agricultural sectors.

Anikpo (1986) argued that the western type of education set new sets of social values and legal system act as some of the reasons for women inferiority. Yet for Nigeria at last the federal office of statistics estimated the rural population of Nigeria to be 51.6% in 2000. The 1991 provisional census figure shows that women constitute 49.6% of Nigeria's population. Thus women constitute a critical proportion of the productive population of Nigeria. Emezi and Ndohe 1997 said that women contributions to environmental development are many. The roles of women in the environmental education start from home with the different vigorous domestic work chores.

Otuode (2013) agrees that traditionally and historically, women occupy various positions in various societies. In ancient Rome Athens and Egypt for instance women occupied various positions which were defined by the cultural norms and values of these societies rather than what they would get from them. He agreed that the traditional African societies would reserve remarkable power for women but in spite of this, they are not allowed to use their power. The issue remains that going by the functionalist approach; women are a part of the society and have certain functions that they exhibit.

Afigbe (2009) agreed that to the extended mankind needed all its physical and mental energy to achieve the much longed for transformation of their environment and social condition of existence, women are regarded as unit of physical energy who are seen in new height as very important factors for success in development. He went further to argue that essentially with the orthodox violation of domestic roles and achievement that made the women of Rome to provide happiness and secure home for their male folk to venture out and perform the brave deed.

#### **The Role of Women in Management**

Women have made positive contribution in environmental management in Nigeria. They have contributed in environmental development like environmental

education, which starts from the home with different rigorous domestic work. Children are taught how to sweep, to clean and wash both plates and their body. In doing this, they do not only learn to keep environment clean but they are taught the consequences of living in a dirty environment. By so doing, Nigerian women train their children ranging from body cleaning to general house cleaning. They are indeed the first known environmental educators.

At the community level especially in the traditional Ibo society where the market clean up exercise is being practiced, it is the women that sweep and weed all the roads and tracks in the community. No doubt, failure to weed or sweep any part assigned to one has great consequences. Similarly the streams are normally cleaned and weeded. Through this activity is all embracing but women do much of the work as is their responsibility to clear the refuse dumped in and around the stream while men clear the bushes around.

Women in the teaching profession are known to be very strict in ensuring that the class and school environment are kept clean. This they do by explicit teaching of the importance of cleanliness and how to get about it or by commanding neat and clean dressing while discouraging and condemning dirty habits. This attitude to cleanliness by women is not surprising in view of the fact that women are naturally clean. For instance, no matter how poor women are their dressing must be clean, surrounding swept on a daily basis. This peculiar role of women has been recognized traditionally to the extent that the normal question asked by any visitor to any dirty compound is "whether there are no women in the compound".

Apart from the inestimable role of women in domestic and academic development of their individual families, they have contributed to national development vis-a-vis waste management and environmental consciousness is obvious to all. In the field of agriculture for instance, the African women have contributed immensely to proper waste management. It is important to know that the Nigerian women have made a lot of progress in waste utilization and recycling. In the traditional Ikeduru women effectively utilized all waste generated in and around the house to start with, when she uses fire wood she realizes that the ashes and charcoal should be dumped in her plantain garden and at times she uses it in scaring soldier ants from the house. Ikeduru local area women have contributed significant roles to the socio-economic and biological development of the vital part of the state. Generally, women are versatile gender contributing in a wide unquantifiable way to the agricultural development, educational growth and economic growth of the country. Whenever women are found they play roles which help not only in keeping the environment clean but also aid in impacting environmental management ethics to those around them women have given life and hope to their families by providing decent and pollution free environment at their respective homes, through their peculiar indigenous methods of waste management and conversion to agro manure. They also contribute immensely in improving up our working ethic. Through cleaning jobs as most cleaning jobs in the offices and major roads are still done by the women.

#### **The Concept of Women Participation in Rural Development**

It was the realization of various contributions which women have made towards the social, economic and political development of the country that the present administration

had set up various programmers aimed at lifting women up from protracted slumber and sensitizes them to appreciate their responsibility towards the participation in rural development of their country. The old and conservative belief of most people especially in the past is that women do not go beyond the kitchen.

Judith (2009) writes on Nigerian women and the Babangida administration. She felt that the administration has done a lot to improve the women and to secure social acceptability. Today a lot of women have been rehabilitated and posed with ever willing to participate in all sphere of the countries development. The federal government also inaugurated members National Committee for women. A Commissioner saddled with the responsibility of finding solution to the problems facing women in the country. She concluded that in spite of these programmers executed by the government to change the status of women, there is still political apathy of their side plainly due to lack of exposure or inferiority complex.

The concept of women participation in rural development of our society particularly in Ikeduru local Government Area from the inception of Ikeduru local government area, there are some associations that came up like Awus, Ugiri- lke welfare union and other association from Ama Imo, umuezem, umuodom which were started by some few groups of active people including women such as Mrs. Josephine Okeye, Mrs. Adaze. They started this association with the aim of coming together to discuss the welfare of the community especially the market days and sweeping of the community road. It went on from stage to stage and the association grew to the extent that its activities were not only kindred development, but involves the socio-economic development of the rural people because other villages joined them. Ikeduru women progressive union extended that even the newly married women have the seriousness and urge to belong to the association. These associations help to build schools in the rural areas of Ikeduru Local Government Area to improve the welfare of the rural communities

Hence Obianuju (2014) argued that "it is her duty to feed the family, cloth her children and train them to respect the laws culture and the people." The power of women to produce children and manage these human resources as well as doing other social work is hardly over emphasized. This, no meaningful development will take place without the women's contribution together with men's folk.

#### **The Role of the Women in Rural Development in Ikeduru**

History has shown that women have played significant role in rural development and in different communities all over the world. Like political, economic, social, education, family, health, agriculture and in all field of human Endeavour. These roles of women in the rural area by extension translate to national development.

In the area of politics, the women of Ikeduru have played a very important role in national and rural development. Such as minister of commissioner and even chairlady to their respective local government. The meaning of development has involved from its easier narrow conceptualization with economic indication of GNP to a move broad conceptualization as well as the acieration of economic growth, the reduction of inequalities among sex and tradition of absolute poverty.

In essence, development has economic growth component, a modernization of human development

companion and equality or social justice component and a socio-economic transformation component all on a self sustaining basis.

To many people rural development means agricultural development to some is primarily concerned with welfare. Rural development has been confused with rural transformation. The two are not the same because while "transformation" implies a change inform of appearance, nature condition or character, development implies a gradual growth or advancement through progressive change.

The impact of women in rural development therefore forms the individual through the collective development. The discourse here involves individual and collective role of women in rural development and both should be use accordingly because of time constraints. I am compelled to limit my study in few fields.

#### **The Feminist Theory**

The concept of system theory was propounded by David Easton it refers to the ideas or act of viewing of problems, an object or an association in its totality such as the consideration of its combined effect of overall effectiveness.

This approach was adopted because of the importance of inter-connection among the parts including the inter-connection which are considered greater than the sum of individual parts. The process of interaction of system components are directed towards the achievement of some goals or dynamic equilibrium positions. It regards an organization as a system with independent parts of sub-system which has inputs and outputs units as well as processing unit for converting the inputs and outputs. The input in a system includes money, material, manpower, support and demand. The conversion process which is typically internal to the system or organization is essentially the decision process. The output of a system largely consist physical service, political decision, politics and laws. No association or institution can exist in isolation. They exist in an environment of similar or disorder regularization system. Organizations maintain their existence only by exchanging material with their environmental resources. Since this is the nature of interaction of a system within its environment in which performance imposes certain constraints on what can be done and how it can be done.

Finally, this theory is adopted here because of inter-connectedness of system parts. The use of the system theory has aided u to point out the relationship between women association and the constraints the environment impose on the association.

Another theory that will be considered in this research work is feminist theory which was propounded by Drucker Wilhelmina (1847;1925) feminism can be use to describe a political, cultural or economic movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women's right and interest. Women all over the world have been molested and sexually abused by their male folks without being questioned by anybody in the society. Governments should exact a law that guides and protect the interest of women in the society. If the while women can involve in any political activity of their society without being marginalized by their male folks I feel it will be of a paramount use if the African society can emulate them. Feminist theory advocates for equal rights of all women in any economic, cultural and political activity of any kind.

**Table 1. Marital Status of Respondent**

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	63	18%
Single	78	22.3%
Devoiced	70	20
Widow/widower	99	28.3%
Separated	40	11.45
Total	350	100

This table indicates that 18% are married 22.3% are single, 20% are devoiced, 28.3% widow/widower and 11.4% are separated.

**Table 2. Number Of Times Sport in Ikeduru**

Terms	Frequency	Percentage
2-5 years	65	18.6%
6-10 years	59	16.9%
11-15 years	86	24.6 %
16-20years	60	17.1%
21 and above	80	22.8%
Total	350	100

The table shows that 86 (24.6%) has the highest number of respondents who have stayed in Ikeduru Local Government in Imo State.

## Section B

**Table 3. Women have Effectuated Development**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agreed	100	28.65%
Agreed	65	18..6%
Disagreed	55	15.7%
Strongly disagreed	55	15.7%
Undecided	70	20%
Total	350	100

The above table shows that 100(28.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed that affect development in Ikeduru Local Government in Imo State.

**Table 4. Political Apathy Prevent Development In Ikeduru**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	90	25.7%
Disagreed	50	14.3%
Undecided	60	17.1%
Strongly agreed	100	28.6%
Strongly disagreed	50	14.3%
Total	350	100

The table clearly shows that 100(28.6%) of the respondents strongly agree that political prevent development in Ikeduru local government in Imo State.

**Table 5. Numbers of Women Encouraged to go School**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	60	17.1%
Disagreed	75	21.4%
Un decided	65	18.6%
Strongly agreed	70	20%
Strongly disagreed	80	22.9%
Total	350	100

The table indicates that 17.1% agreed, 21.4% disagreed, 18.6% has not decided, 20% strongly agreed and 22.9% strongly that women in Ikedru Local Ggovernment in Imo State are not encouraged, to go to school.

**Table 6. Numbers of Women Allowed to Participate in Societal Affairs In Ikeduru**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	57	16.3%
Disagreed	95	27.1%
Undecided	35	10%
Strongly agreed	63	18%
Strongly disagreed	100	28.6%
Total	350	100

The table show that 100 (28.6%) strongly disagreed that women are not allowed to participate in societal affair in Ikeduru local government in Imo State.

**Table 7. Ways In Which Women Contribute Towards Development Variables**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Financial support	82	23.4%
Women economic empowerment	77	22%
Other (specify)	64	18.3%
All of the above	85	24.3%
None of the above	42	12%
Total	350	100

The table clearly shows that 82 (23.4%) says is financial support, 77 (22%) women economic empowerment, 64 (18.3) others, 85(24.3%) agreed with all white 42(12%) said none of the above.

**Table 8. Opinions of Women Towards The Community**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	87	24.9%
Disagreed	66	18.8%
Undecided	35	10%
Strongly agreed	110	31.4%
Strongly agreed	52	14.9%
Total	350	100

The table shows that 110 (31.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed that women opinion do not matter in the community.

**Table 9. Women Should Be Allowed in The Political Affairs**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	81	23.1%
Disagreed	70	20%
Undecided	69	19.7%
Strongly agreed	90	25.8%
Strongly disagreed	40	11.40%
Total	350	100

From the table 81(23.1%) agreed 70(20%) disagreed, 69 (19.7%) have not decided, 90 (25.8%) strongly agreed and 40(11.4%) strongly disagreed that women should be allowed in political affairs of Ikeduru.

**Table 10. Women Contribute to Rural Development only from the Market**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	70	20%
Disagreed	30	8.6%
Undecided	50	14.3%
Strongly agreed	150	42.8%
Strongly disagreed	50	14.3%
Total	350	100

From the above 150 respondent representing 42.8% gives that women contribute to development only from the market

**Table 11. Opinions That Motivate Women Development**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Abolition of dissimilarity	80	22.9%
Women economic empowerment	86	24.6%
Other	73	20.8%
All of the above	90	25.7%
None of the above	21	6%
Total	350	100

From the table below, 80 respondents representing 22.9% says women can be motivated through abolition of dissimilarity, 86 representing 24.6% says is women economic empowerment, 73 representing 20.8% says others, 90 representing 25.7% mentioned all of the above while 21 representing 6% respondents says none of the above.

**Table 12. Types of Development Prevalent in Ikeduru**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Social infrastructure	90	25.7%
Economic activities	80	22.9%
Activism	70	20%
Social cohesion	40	11.4%
Other (specify)	350	100

The table shows that 25.7% says social infrastructure is prevalent, 22.9% economic activities, 20% activism, 20% social cohesion and other 11.4% mentioned theirs.

### Testing of hypothesis

The chi-square was used in testing of hypothesis which the researcher formulated earlier

The level of significance is 0.05

The test statistics is  $X^2$

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

$H_0$ : Women have to some extent affected the development in Ikeduru from 2007 – 2017.

#### Test 1

$O_i$	$E_i$	$O_i - E_i$	$(O_i - E_i)^2$	$\frac{\sum(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$
65	70	-5	25	0.4
100	70	30	900	12.9
70	70	0	0	0
55	70	-15	225	3.2
60	70	-10	100	1.4

Degree of freedom  $n-1$

$$= 5 - 1 = 4$$

$X^2$  Critical value = 9.488  $n$  9.49

$X^2$  calculation = 17.9

Decision rate: if  $X^2$  calculated is greater than  $x^2$  critical value reject the null hypothesis.

Decision since  $X^2$  cal >  $X^2$  critical value, thus women have to some extent affected the development in Ikeduru from 2007 – 2017.

$H_1$ : Political apathy among women has seriously prevented development in rural community especially in Ikeduru L.G.A

#### Test 2

$O_i$	$E_i$	$O_i - E_i$	$(O_i - E_i)^2$	$\frac{\sum(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$
90	70	20	400	5.7
50	70	-20	400	5.7
60	70	-10	100	1.4
100	70	30	900	12.9
50	70	-20	400	5.7

Degree of freedom =  $n-1$

$$= 5 - 1 = 4$$

$X^2$  Critical value = 9.488  $n$  = 9.49

$X^2$  calculated = 31.4

Decision: Since  $X^2$  calculated is greater than  $X^2$  critical value ( $X^2$  cal >  $X^2$  crt), the hypothesis is rejected which means that political apathy among women has not seriously presented development in rural community especially in Ikeduru L.G.A.

### Conclusion

After critically analyzing all the data collected and summarizing them, the researcher is hereby fully concluded that the role of women in rural development is of paramount important to all and Sunday communities of the would the date, the researcher discovered that actually women in Ikeduru communities have been involved in rural development of the area despite the traditional and cultural restriction they do encounter.

Basically, the roles of women in Ikeduru communities has been fact both socially, economically, domestically and politically goes beyond towards the development of the communities. This has gone a long way to disapprove the general conception of the public that women are only to be seen and not board.

In conclusion, Governments should intensity efforts in encouraging women in rural communities are to bring about more meaningful development in Ikeduru local Government Area.

### Recommendation

The research after due analysis of the impact of women on rural development of Nigeria with a particular reference to the social, and economic development of the nation, the researcher made the following recommendation which she because are very necessary.

1. Base on the date collected it was discovered that the made counterparts do not encourage their women in development activities. Research therefore, suggests for a re-orientation of the mark folks and the general public towards the importance of women participation in rural developmental programs and projects.

2. Government should intensity efforts in encouraging women in rural areas for development as well as finding more means of mobilizing them to participate in rural development through enlightenment campaigns, women education, service and reserving certain post in the economic section for women

3. Adequate enlightenment programs should be mounted through various workshops, seminars, conferences in order to bring home the impact of women participation in rural development.

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