



PAT June, 2017; 13 (1): 1-10 ISSN: 0794-5213

Online copy available at [www.patnsukjournal.net/currentissue](http://www.patnsukjournal.net/currentissue)



Publication of Nasarawa State University, Keffi

## Local People Participation in Local Government Agricultural Development Activities in Rivers State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study assessed local participation in Local Government (LG) agricultural development activities in Rivers State. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. One Hundred and Eighty respondents were selected from Nine communities from Three Local Government Areas (LGAs) using the simple random sampling technique. Data collected were analysed using mean scores and factor analysis. Findings show a mean age of 44.3 years and great proportion (53.4%) of the respondents were male, married (66.7%), had secondary education (34.4%), had farming and fishing (50.3%) as their main occupation and earn between N21000 and N400000 (28.3%) per month. Local people participated in LG agricultural activities as labourers (23.3%) and at the implementation stage (54.0%) of agricultural activities. The benefits of local people participation are: provides local ownership of project ( $\bar{X} = 2.90$ ), ensures sustainability of projects ( $\bar{X} = 2.82$ ), develops local expert ( $\bar{X} = 2.58$ ), among others. Factors inhibiting local people from participating in LG agricultural activities were: economic factor such as corruption (0.707), institutional factors such as politicizing selection of participants (0.523) and technical factors such as lack of adequate incentives (0.484). The probit logit result shows that participation is significantly influenced by educational level, occupation and income.

**Keywords:** Local people, Participation, Local Government, Agricultural Development

### Introduction

Local government was set up in an effort to take government close to the people; it was to take governance closer to local and rural people. It is the smallest/lowest arm of governance and sub-unit of government which aim is to serve the people at the rural areas. In Nigeria, the local government is the lowest (third-tier) in capacity. This position as the third-tier of government has placed it in a position of closeness or nearness to the people at the rural communities (Adamolekun, 1979). Its closeness to the local people enables it to perform some special functions that bother on the aspirations, interests and welfare of the people in the rural areas. This is to enable rural people participate in the development of their communities; fast tract rural development and make the people have a sense of belonging on federal and state administration to impact positively on the people. By functions and structure of the local government, it acts as partners and agents of the state and federal government with the aim of reaching out to local people with federal government develop initiatives, policy and laws while on the other, complimenting the attraction of the former. Local people are the overwhelming majority of the population in Nigeria (Albert and Igbokwe, 2014). They constitute the largest number of voters, tax payers and the main channel where the nation gets its food and raw materials supply. These

local people dwell in the rural areas of the country and the local government was established by law and given the attorney or power to take governance close to the people, in order to improve rural people standard of living and to accelerate infrastructural development of the rural areas. Local government is meant to perform functions like the provision and maintenance of market, primary education, health services and development of the agriculture sector (Olanipekun, 1988; Agbakoba and Ogbonna; 2004).

Agricultural development is a part of rural development as rural areas can develop with agriculture being developed. This is because about 70 percent of the rural dwellers are engaged in agricultural practices as their major source of income (Nwachukwu, 2008). When the local people are involved or participate in programmes/projects implemented in their areas, the benefits are usually obvious. According to Bretty (2003) and Oladele (2013) participation is a joined effort of several individuals to exercise control over resources and institutions. Most times, some development projects/programmes were identified, planned and implemented without involving the people who are to benefit from them (Nwachukwu, 2005). Research has shown that satisfaction is achieved and project sustainability is ensured when the local people are involved in diagnosing their problems, planning for the solution and executing their project.

Local participation in agriculture development is the collective involvement of the rural population in the identification, choice, implementation and evaluation of programmes/ projects designed to improve their standard of living. Their involvements in projects/programmes that will benefit them will arouse their interest, give them the sense of belonging and ensure the sustainability of the project. It is only when people in consensus, determine what their problems are, what they need, and with the help of government /donor agencies, plan and execute the projects which will in turn enable agriculture development projects will be successful. It is wrong for politicians in government to just formulate a rural project and then try to implement it without the involvement of the people.

The study will unravel the level of local peoples' participation in LGA agricultural development activities by finding answers to the following research questions. What are the socio-economic factors influencing the local people participation in agricultural development activities in the state? At what level do the local people got involved in the agricultural development? Is there any advantage or benefits in allowing local people to participate in agricultural development activities set up in their communities? And what are the factors inhibiting local people participating in agricultural development activities in the state?

### **Methodology**

The study adopted survey design. The population of the study comprised all local leaders (traditional rulers, men, youth and women leaders and officials of Community Development Committees (CDCs)), and household heads in Rivers State. Three LGAs were randomly selected from each of the three senatorial zones in the state giving a total of nine LGAs. Two communities were purposively selected from each of the selected LGAs based on the presence of LG agricultural development activities in these communities. This gave a total of 18 communities. One traditional ruler, two CDC officials, seven household heads were randomly selected from each of the selected communities, giving a total sample size of 180 respondents. Primary data were used which include; questionnaire, observation and interview schedule were used for collection of data. A test-retest method was used with alternate forms of the questionnaire to establish a reliability coefficient of 0.73. To determine perceived benefits of local people participating in LG agricultural development activities, 4-point rating scale was

used while 3-point rating scale was used to ascertain factors inhibiting local people participating in LG agricultural development activities. Factor analysis was used to classify 20 inhibiting variables into four groups. The influence of socio economic attributes on participation in LG development activities was ascertained using logit model. Data were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics. The dependent variables included index of participation as well as other socio-economic attributes of the households. This was the same variable used in the logit model to represent the participation dummy variable.

## **Results and Discussion**

Entries in Table 1 show that a high (30.6%) percentage was between the age category of 40 and 49 years. The mean age is 44.3 years. This implies that majority of the respondents were in their middle age, which is an indication that active able bodied people who are still in their productive age were actively involved in agricultural activities which according to Albert and Deekor (2013), age determines the level of involvement of famers in agriculture. Also, it shows that a little above half (53.4%) of the respondents were male while 46.6% were females. This indicates that women were less involved in agricultural activities and programmes in the study area thereby allowing male to be dominant. Majority (66.7%) of the respondents were married. This implies that the respondents were people who have responsibilities to accomplish such as to provide food and money to meet the needs of their families. Ekong (2003) stated that marriage imposes a sense of responsibility on someone. A higher number (34.4%) of the respondents had secondary education (WASC/SSC/GCE) and 32.7% had primary education (FSLC). This implies that majority of the respondents had some level of formal education which is an advantage as education is generally considered as an important factor that enhances the participation of famers in agricultural programmes and activities.

Furthermore, Table 1 shows that half (50.3%) of the respondents were into farming and fishing as their main occupation. This is in agreement with Albert (2013) study on livelihood of rural people in Rivers State, which revealed that 50% - 53.2% of the rural people depend on farming and fishing as sources of livelihood. A higher percentage (34.9%) of the respondents had trading as secondary occupation. This implies that, in addition to farming, the respondents rely on trading as source of income to meet household demand. A greater number (28.3%) of the household heads earn between N21000 and N400000 per month. A mean monthly income of N52.08 per month indicates that the respondents earn more than the Federal Government minimum wage of N18000 for workers in the nation.

The binary logit model used to test local people participation in LG agricultural development activities is not significantly influenced by their socio-economic attributes (such as income, age, educational attainment, occupation and marital status) as shown in Table 2 shows that educational level with coefficient of -0.1126, occupation (-0.319) and income (0.0010) were significant ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). This indicates that the probability of local people participating in LG agricultural development activities is influenced by educational level, occupation and income. Education can positively influence a farmer's behavior, knowledge, capacity and ability to adopt, participate, receive and give out information including information on available agricultural programmes/projects and the benefits of participating in such projects (Albert and Nne-Cosy 2014).

**Table 1: Percentage distribution of personal characteristics of households**

Variables	N= 180 Percentage	Mean Score	Standard deviation (SD)
<b>Age (years)</b>			
20-29	9.1		
30-39	28.3		
40-49	30.5	44.3 years	12.8
50-59	18.3		
60-69	5.6		
70-79	6.1		
80 and above	1.7		
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	53.6		
Female	46.4		
<b>Marital status</b>			
Married	31.1		
Widow/widower	2.2		
<b>Educational level</b>			
No formal education	18.6		
FSLC	32.7		
SSC/GCE/WASC	34.4		
OND/NCE	7.7		
B.SC/BED/HND	6.1		
M.SC/MBA	0.5		
<b>Primary Occupation</b>			
Farming	50.3		
Artisan	10.2		
Civil/Public Servant	24.7		
Business/Trading	18.5		
<b>Secondary Occupation</b>			
Business	12.1		
Trading	34.9		
Farming	13.5		
Teaching	9.1		
No secondary occupation	30.4		
<b>Income level (₦)</b>			
Less than 20,000	16.6		
21,000-40,000	28.3		
41,000-60,000	18.3	52.08 per month	
61,000-80,000	13.9		
81,000-100,000	12.2		
101,000 and above	10.7		

**Source: Field survey (2014)**

The unemployed local people embraced LG agricultural activities in order to have a source of livelihood. The null hypothesis which held that: Local people participation in agricultural development activities is not significantly influenced by their socio-economic attributes (such as income, age, educational attainment, occupation and marital status) is hereby rejected and alternative hypothesis was upheld

**Table 2: Result of binary logit of households’ socio economic attributes on participation in agricultural activities**

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-Statistic	Prob.
Intercept	-3.0032*	1.242	-2.417	0.016
Age	-0.010	0.023	-0.415	0.678
Marital Status	-0.166	0.660	-0.252	0.801
Years of Education	-0.1126*	0.045	-2.514	0.012
Occupation	-0.319*	0.199	-1.605	0.009
Income	0.0010*	0.000	6.742	0.000
R-squared	0.546	Mean dependent variable		0.472
S.D. dependent variable	0.501	S.E. of regression		0.310
Akaike info criterion	0.695	Sum squared residual		16.732
Schwarz criterion	0.801	Log likelihood		-56.537
Hannan-Quinn criter.	0.738	Deviance		113.075
LR statistic	135.901	Avg. log likelihood		-0.3140
Prob(LR statistic)	0.000			

**\*p ≤ 0.05**

**Level of local people participation in Local Government agricultural activities**

Table 3 revealed that a high percent (23.3%) of the respondents participated in LG agricultural activities as labourers. These were the local people who were employed by LG to watch over the poultry, fish farm and other LG projects either as watch night or day guards. This was closely followed by 29.4% of the respondents who participated but do not know anything about the project. They were given the impression that the project was good for them. These are the rural people who were given tractors to farm, fishing nets to fish and fertilizer to use because the LG knew it will help their yield. Also, 19.3% of the respondents were consulted and informed but the project was then designed by external agencies.

The other respondents who participated were the youths, about 10.4% of the youths participated at the fish farm and aqua center training established by Obio/Akpor and Asari-Toru LGs in order to make them entrepreneurs in fish farming while 10.0% of the leaders participated at the period when LG needed plots of land to execute their projects. The traditional leaders were consulted to donate some plots of land. None of the respondents took the initiative to identify a project and embarked on its actualization independent of external bodies.

**Table 3: Local peoples' level of participation in LG agricultural activities**

Level of Local Participation	Agricultural Activities (n=180)														
	Building of mar Ket	Fish Farm	Poultry farms	Giving of loans to farmers	Provision of fertilizers To farmers	Provision of tractor	Oil mill project	Distribution of nets to fisher men	Cassava farms	Oil palm plantati on	Provision of improved planting seeds	Training of youths in agric	Oil mill proje ct	Enco uragi ng coope rative	%
Participated as a Labourer	32	12	9	0	0	0	6	0	4	14	0	0	10	0	23.3
Participated in training at the project	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	0	0	10.4
Participated as a leader in land allocation	4	5	6	0	0	0	4	0	3	4	0	0	4	0	10.0
Participated at the planning	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	10	11.7
Participated in monitoring the execution of the project	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	3.3
Consulted to know my opinion about a problem that is being planned	7	2	2	0	0	0	2	4	2	1	0	0	0	8	5.6
Participated but did not know anything about the project but was given the impression that it was good	3	5	0	5	7	3	0	3	0	0	1	8	3	5	29.4
Consulted, informed and participated, but the project was then designed by external agencies	7	9	0	3	7	3	0	12	0	0	11	7	0	8	19.3
Participated by actively interacting with the project providers	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2.8
Participated on paper/ document than in actuality	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	2	4.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	53	59	19	18	15	9	12	21	9	21	13	42	21	33	

Source: Field survey (2014)

Multiple Responses

### **Statues and types of participation by local people in LG agricultural activities**

Entries in Table 4 show that a little more than half (54.0%) of the respondents participated in the implementation stage of agricultural activities carried out by LGs in the state. Out of this percentage, 23.3% participated because of the incentives involved (which is Material Incentive Induced Participation), 19.3% of the respondents were consulted and informed to participate when the activity/project had already been diagnosed, planned and designed by external agency (which is Passive Participation) and 4.4% participated on paper/document than in actuality (which is Tokenism participation), while 7% participated in LG agricultural project because they were given the impression that participating in the project will be good for them (which is Manipulative Participation).

The table further revealed that 11.7% of the respondents participated at the planning stage. They participated by actively interacting with the project providers to identify the problems and the action plans taken which is Interactive Participation. Only 3.3% of the respondents participated at the diagnostic stage. They were consulted to know their opinion about the project that had being planned for, while none of the respondents took their initiatives to identify the project and embarked on its actualization independent of external bodies that is Self-Mobilization Participation.

The result of the findings implies that rural people are willing to participate in agricultural activities that would improve their standard of living especially when incentives in the form of cash and materials are attached. This kind of participation could be seen in World Bank development projects such as FADAMA and IFAD where the non-governmental agencies provided the money and ask individual to determine the project. Self-mobilization type of participation is that which gives local people room to initiate and analyze project and embark on its actualization. This must have hampered the total participation of the local people. Also, traditional rulers, and CDC members participated on paper/document than in actuality. They were informed about the agricultural activity when the project had already been planned and designed by the executors. This is an indication that leaders were not actually involved in the identification, planning and execution of agricultural activities. The involvement of local people in project implementation starts with the identification of the problems in their domain and the action plan for the problem as designed by Rifkin and Kangere (1988) in their model on participation identified needs assessment as one of the indicators for measuring participation.

### **Perceived benefits of local people participation in LG agricultural development activities**

The result of the responses of rural households on inhibiting factors to local people participation in LG agricultural development activities is shown in Table 5. Using a mean score of 2.50 as a decision rule, almost all the listed variables were considered benefits of local people in agricultural activities in the state. These variables included: motivation of local people to participate (M=2.58), provides local ownership of project (M=2.90), ensures sustainability of projects (M=2.82), develops local expert (M=2.58), enhances group dynamics among stakeholders through the accommodation of diverse opinion (M=2.62), Ensures loyalty to the government (M=2.58), rural people becoming actors rather than instruments in development processes (M=2.52), arouse local interest in government projects and programmes (M=2.73), empowers local people and (M=2.67)were benefits of local people participation in LG agricultural development activities in the state. The pride of owning a project, will make local people do everything to protect and ensure that the project is sustainable. The people will see the project has been owned by them and this will give them the sense of fulfillment. These will make local people becoming actors in agricultural development projects rather than instrument in development processes.

**Table 4: Percentage distribution of stages and types of rural households' level of participation in LG agricultural activities**

S/N	Level of participation	Percentage (n=180)	Types of participation	Stage of participation
1	Participated in the project because of the incentives (money, inputs) involved	23.3	Material Incentive Induced	Implementation
2	Participated but did not know anything about the project but was given the impression that it was good	29.4	Manipulative	Implementation
3	Participated on paper/ document than in actuality	4.4	Tokenism	Implementation
4	Participated by actively interacting with the project providers to identify the projects in the community and the action plans for the project	10.0	Interactive	Planning
5	Took the initiative to identify a project and embarked on its actualization independent of external bodies	0.0	Self Mobilization	Identification/ Planning/ Implementation
6	Consulted, informed and participated, but the project was then designed by external agencies	19.3	Passive	Implementation
7	Monitoring stage	3.3	-	Monitoring and evaluation

Source: Field survey (2014)

**Table 5: Perception benefits of local people participation in LG agricultural activities**

S/N	Benefits	Mean	Standard Dev	n=180
1	Motivates people to participate	2.58*	0.612	
2	Provides local ownership of projects	2.90*	1.173	
3	Ensures sustainability of projects	2.82*	1.133	
4	Develops local experts	2.58*	0.713	
5	Facilitates social cohesion	1.79**	1.135	
6	Enhances group dynamics among stakeholders through the accommodation of diverse opinion	2.62*	0.628	
7	Ensures loyalty to the government	2.58*	0.575	
8	Rural people becoming actors rather than instruments in development processes	2.52*	0.455	
9	Arouse local interest in government projects and programmes	2.73*	0.508	
10	Empowers local people	2.67*	0.517	
11	Ensures gender equality	1.86**	1.166	
12	Ensures successful programmes	2.23**	1.032	

\*Benefits      \*\*Not a Benefit

Source: Field survey (2014)



### Factors inhibiting local people from participating in LG agricultural development activities

Table 6 shows the results of extracted factors of the rotated component matrix based on the responses of respondents on the possible factors inhibiting local people from participating in LG agricultural activities. Four inhibiting factors were extracted based on the responses of the respondents namely: economic (factor 1), institutional (factor 2), and technical (factor 3) and environmental (factor 4). Loaded high under economic factor is corruption (0.707). Corruption has inhibited local people from participating in LG agricultural development activities. Some LG officials will want local people to pay money for them to be selected. Loading under institutional factors (factor 2) include politicizing of selection of participants (0.523). Elected LG chairmen or politicians in the area, often times would want their supporters to be selected as means of settling the boys who worked for them. Most times, these boys will not have the interest in agriculture. Factor 3 (technical factors) were: lack of adequate incentives (0.484), non-participation of the people in the projects (0.498), lack of needs assessment or inadequate needs assessment (0.461), system disconnect or not siting the appropriate project required by the local people (0.501), poor interest of the community (0.477), poor conception and planning of project (0.417), and youth restiveness in the rural areas (0.451). When the needs of rural people were not identified before siting a project, it makes leaders to implement inappropriate projects and activities that are not required by the local people which will ultimately make the people to have no interest in the project. When local people are allowed to participate in the choice of projects, diagnoses, planning and in the implementation, motivation is engendered for full participation. There was no loading under factor 4 (environmental factors).

**Table 6: Rotated component matrix based on the responses of rural people on inhibiting factors to local people participating in LG agricultural projects/programmes**

Inhibiting Factors	Factor 1 (Economic Factors)	Factor 2 (Institutional Factors)	Factor 3 (Technical Factors)	Factor (Environmental Factors)
Lack of adequate incentives	0.239	0.387	<b>0.484</b>	0.391
Corruption	<b>0.707</b>	0.306	0.243	0.251
Poor and dilapidating infrastructures in the rural areas	0.203	0.431	0.322	0.259
Youth restiveness in the rural areas	0.189	0.211	<b>0.451</b>	0.047
Effects of climate change	0.219	0.147	0.229	0.355
Not siting the appropriate project required by the local people	0.222	0.156	<b>0.501</b>	0.041
Lack of needs assessment before project implementation	0.224	0.159	<b>0.461</b>	0.182
Poor interest of the community	0.334	0.121	<b>0.477</b>	0.041
Politicizing of selected participants	0.372	<b>0.523</b>	0.210	0.312
Poor conception and planning of project	0.223	0.319	0.417	0.159
Riskiness of the venture project without insurance provision	0.188	0.102	0.032	- 0.015

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 7 iteration

Source: Field survey (2014)

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Local people participated as labourers at the project sites of agricultural activities initiated by LG while the traditional leaders and local leaders were involved in the allocation of land to the executors (State/LG). Also, some of the local people part took in the implementation stage in LG agricultural activities/projects. In that respect, local participation in LG agricultural development activities was significantly influenced by their educational level, occupation and income. However, economic, institutional and technical factors such as corruption, lack of adequate incentives, non-participation of the people in the projects, lack of needs assessment or inadequate needs assessment have hindered local people from participating in LG agricultural development activities in the study area. The study recommends that LG should implement agricultural development activities that would impact on the lives of the local people as this will arouse or motivate local people to participate.

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