



## Factors Affecting Women's Participation in Environmental Conservation and Protection

Dan, P. H. and Nwachukwu, J. Q.

Humid Forest Research Station, Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria Umuhia, Abia State

Corresponding Author's email: [prettyhenry2020@gmail.com](mailto:prettyhenry2020@gmail.com)

### Abstract

Women play an important role in environmental protection and conservation, hence this study, analysed the factors affecting women's participation in environmental conservation and protection in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Samples for this study were randomly selected from the four clans that make up Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom. The four clans are Etoi, Offot, Oku and Ikono. Oral interview was used to source for information from respondents with little or no education, while for the literate, questionnaires were administered and later retrieved for interpretation. Exactly 120 questionnaires were administered; 30 per clan. Simple statistical tools (frequency, percentage) and charts were used in data analysis. The results showed that, many (45.5%) respondents that participated in environmental conservation and protection were married woman within the age range of 31-40years, had tertiary education (42.8%), were members of NGO (31.8%) and were aware. About 55.5% of respondents confirmed that level of education affect participation, while 44.5% indicated it does not, 59.1% noted that wealth does not stop participation, 27.3% indicated it can affect and 13.6% partially. Majority of respondents (84.6%) said religion was not a barrier to participation in environmental conservation and protection, while 15.5% agreed that, religion partially does, and majority (50.9%) indicated custom/tradition. Therefore, there is need for provision of alternative sources of energy at reduced rate for domestic and industrial use; more awareness through various governmental agencies should be made on the danger of destroying the eco-system and the benefits inherent in participating in environmental conservation and protection.

**Keywords:** *Determination, awareness, participation, environmental conservation, protection*

### Introduction

A lot of studies on women and environment have revealed that women are significant actors in natural resource management and they play a key role in environmental protection and conservation. They have recognized the need not only to protect the bio-diversity, but also to recreate it. Warren (1991) referred to them as the custodian of the micro-environment. He stressed that, they have over the years shown themselves to be knowledgeable and good environment managers. Anyakoha (1999) noted that, women especially those in developing countries have been shown to exhibit a direct relationship with environment therefore they not only bear brunt of environmental degradation, but also play vital role in its management. Rhoda (1993) reported that women's skill and needs is a focal issue in sustainable development and this has often been ignored due to general misconception and marginalization of women's role in preserving biodiversity.

In many parts of Nigeria, women are both water suppliers and water managers (Oluwohunwa *et al.*,

2009). In Nigeria, some women associations like Association of Women in Forestry and Environment (AWIFE) and many others exist, which their objectives among others to educate womenfolk and the general public of the benefits of conserving and protecting the environment. The problem of the present day environmental protection cannot be solved with the involvement of a few selected groups of women. It requires a global involvement of the entire community of womenfolk. Today, there is need for participation of womenfolk, of every class/every locality, and any woman should not under estimate her role. It therefore becomes necessary to evaluate the factors that affect women's participation in conservation and protection of the environment in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

### Methodology

#### *Area of Study*

The study was conducted in Uyo Local Government Area (LGA) of Akwa Ibom State, located between latitude 4°55' and 5°05' North of the Equator and between

longitudes 8°00' and 7°50' east of the meridian. It is bounded in the north by Itu LGA, east by Uruan LGA, west by Nsit Ibom and Etinan, north west by Abak, south west by Ibesikpo Asutan and south by Uruan LGA. Etoi, Offot, Oku and Ikono are the four clans in Uyo included in the study. The level of urbanization has been on the increase in the study area resulting in erosion.

### **Sampling Techniques**

The respondents for the study were randomly selected from the four clans, Etoi, Offot, Oku and Ikono that make up Uyo LGA. Oral interview was used to source for information from respondents with little or no education, while for the literate; questionnaires was administered and later retrieved for interpretation. Exactly 120 questionnaires were administered, 30 each in the four clans. In each of the four clans, 10 households were chosen by simple random sampling, and then out of these 10 households, 3 respondents were chosen at random. Focus group discussion (FGD) interview based on the questionnaires prepared was used to elicit information from the respondents.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and percentages.

### **Results and Discussion**

Result of the study as presented in Table 1 above shows the socio economic characteristics (Age, Marital Status, Educational Qualification, Occupation and Religion) of the respondents in the study area. Many (45.5%) were married, while 25.5% single, 20% widowed and 9.1% divorced. This implies that, the women that participated in environmental conservation and protection in the study area were mostly married women who have family responsibilities. Many (43.7%) of the respondents were within the age ranges of 31-40 years, while 28.2%, 20.9% and 7.3% were within 41-50, 20-30, 51 and above years respectively. This implies that, women who participated in environmental conservation and protection were within their productive years in the study area. Also in Table 1, many (42.8%) of the respondents had tertiary education, 28.2%, 20% and 9.1% attained secondary, primary and non formal education respectively. This result shows the effect of urbanization to the study area. Uyo LGA has become one of the metropolitan cities in Nigeria, where people from different culture, educational background, religion, occupation etc. inhabit, unlike before the creation of the State, when it has small population of people in the village. Most of the respondents were women who obtained tertiary education and belong to NGO's. The above findings are in accordance with the findings of Ekong (2010) who stated that metropolitan settlements in Nigeria usually combine a number of functions including governmental, religious, commercial, educational industrial and recreational among others. Many of the respondents (48.2%) involved themselves in either full-time or part-time farming, while 36.4% and 15.5% were artisans and civil

servants respectively. Christianity was the religion of almost all the respondents (91.8%).

Figure 1 show various environmental conservation and protection measures practiced in the study area. Many (27.3%) practiced agroforestry, followed by the respondents who practiced reforestation (18.2%) and enrichment planting (16.4%). Other respondents practiced afforestation (10%), erosion control (9.4%), plantation establishment (7.3%) and landscaping (4.5%). Many of respondents (27.3%) indicated they preferred agro forestry as their environmental conservation and protection measures; this is in agreement with the findings of Adedayo and Oluronke (2014). According to the respondents, agro forestry system not only maximizes the limited land left due to urbanization in the study area, but also has the advantage of reducing prevalence in insect attack, the litter of tree component serves to protect the crops and the system moderates microclimate (Adeola, 2015).

Table 2 shows the level of awareness/participation of the respondent in environmental conservation and protection in the study area. Majority (55.5%) of the respondents agreed that they were aware of environmental conservation and protection, while 44.5% indicated not aware. About 31.8% got the information about environmental conservation and protection from the NGO, 25.5% read from publications, 21.9% from mass media, 12.7% from consultants and only 8.2% from the extension agents. This result implies that greater information is gotten from the NGOs. In Nigeria, and Uyo LGA in particular, the greatest threat to extension services is inadequate funding and limited staff number which has grounded most of the extension activities. It is being argued that extension as a free public service is no longer sustainable, from the result, it is clear that NGO-based extension service has taken charge of information delivery. Majority of respondents (55.5%) participated in tree planting, while 44.5% do not because of lack of time and preference in planting flowers to trees.

Table 3 shows some of the factors that affect women participation in environmental conservation and protection in the study area. These were: level of wealth of an individual, level of religion, partner/spouse's support and level of education among others. Majority of the respondents (59.1%) noted wealth does not stop participation, 27.3% indicated it can and 13.6% that wealth can partially affect participation. Mrs. Iboro Essien in an interview, when asked how wealth can affect individual participation answered that *most of the wealthy (societal) women may not have time to participate, while some of them feel it is a tedious job to do*. Majority of respondents (84.6%) said religion was not a barrier to participation in environmental conservation and protection. This may be because of the type of religion (Christianity) practiced by almost all the people in the study area, which allows women freedom of movement and participation in public functions, while 15.5% agreed that religion partially affected their

participation. Some respondents in this group practice traditional religion. This religion sees some trees as being sacred, some specific days of the week or times of the year are also sacred; an example is the masquerade season in Ibibio land where women are not allowed to go out (Ekong, 2010). These according to them partially affect their participation, 56.4% respondents agreed that their partners/spouses support their participation in the programme, 27.3% said their partners/spouses do not, while 16.4% agreed that, their spouses partially support them. In an interview with Mrs. Eno Ibiam, one of the respondents made a statement that *her husband does not support her participation and that her husband is not literate*. This is in agreement with the findings of Gardner and Rauser (2001) which states that educational level affects the rate of adoption of innovation. Level of education was one of the factors that affected participation of women in environmental conservation and protection in the area, 55.5% of the respondents confirmed that level of education affect participation, while 44.5% argued that it does not. Educated women understand and adopt innovations more than those that are not educated. Majority of respondent (50.9%) said custom/tradition affected their participation. Since women are not allowed ownership of lands, (Women's Land Link *et al.*, 2010), they have to seek permission from men before embarking on any conservation measures. Variations exist among various sections of the country with respect to the rights of women in land tenure, women's right to land tends to be mainly derived from marriage (as among the Tiv, Ibo and Ibibio people) (Ekong 2010). In some parts of Nigeria as mentioned, women can only use the land that belongs to their husbands.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, women, if given appropriate assistance and free access to land by eliminating all harmful cultural, religious, and social gender inequalities, should be able to get fully involved in environmental management, conservation and protection. It is therefore recommended that government should provide and encourage the use of

alternative source of energy at reduced rates. More extension workers should be employed to create more awareness on good farming practices that are environmentally friendly and also recognize women's role in environmental conservation and protection.

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**Table 1: Socio economics characteristics of the respondents (N=110)**

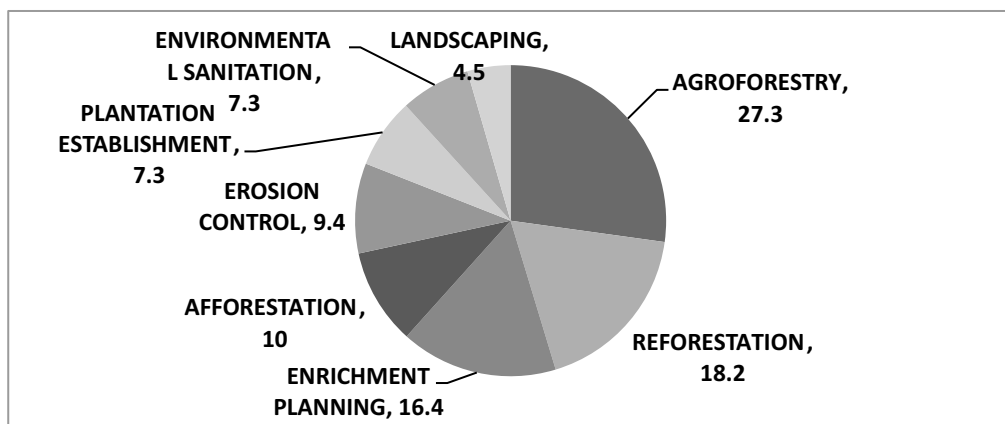
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	50	45.5
Single	28	25.5
Widow	22	20.0
Divorced	10	9.1
<b>Age</b>		
20-30	23	20.9
31-40	48	43.7
41-50	31	28.2
51 and above	8	7.3
<b>Education</b>		
Non-formal education	10	9.1
Primary	22	20.0
Secondary	31	28.2
Tertiary	47	42.8
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farmer	53	48.2
Artisan	40	36.4
Civil Servant	17	15.5
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	101	91.8
Others	9	8.2

**Table 2: Distribution according to level of awareness/ participation of the respondents in environmental conservation and protection (N=110)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Awareness (Environmental Conservation and Protection)</b>		
Aware	61	55.5
Not aware	49	44.5
<b>Source of Information</b>		
Extension Agents	9	8.2
Publications	28	25.5
NGO	35	31.8
Consultant	14	12.7
Mass Media	24	21.9
<b>Tree Planting Participation</b>		
Participate	61	55.5
Do not participate	49	44.5

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to factors affecting participation of women in environmental conservation and protection in the study area (N=110)**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Level of Wealth</b>		
Yes (Affected)	30	27.3
No (Not Affected)	65	59.1
Partially (Affected)	15	13.6
<b>Level of Religion</b>		
Yes(Affected)	-	-
No (Not Affected)	93	84.6
Partially(Affected )	17	15.5
<b>Partner/Spouse Support</b>		
Yes (Support)	62	56.4
No (Do not support)	30	27.3
Partially(Support)	18	16.4
<b>Level of Education</b>		
Affect	61	55.5
Do not affect	49	44.5
<b>Culture/Custom/tradition</b>		
Affect participation	56	50.9
Does not affect	40	36.4
Partially affect	14	12.7
<b>Means of Preparing Meal</b>		
Firewood	41	37.3
Kerosene	44	40.0
Gas Cooker	12	10.9
Solar energy	8	7.3
Electric stove	5	4.5
<b>If firewood, why?</b>		
Other options are expensive	29	26.4
Food prepared with firewood are delicious and faster	56	50.9
Other options are scarce	25	22.7
<b>If government makes other options available at reduced cost, will you stop using firewood?</b>		
Yes	57	46.4
No	47	42.7
Partially	12	10.9



**Fig. 1: Pie Chart Showing some environmental conservation and protection measures practiced in the study area**