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**Sociology of rural women agricultural labour  
groups and implication for the development of  
abakaliki agricultural zone of Ebonyi state**

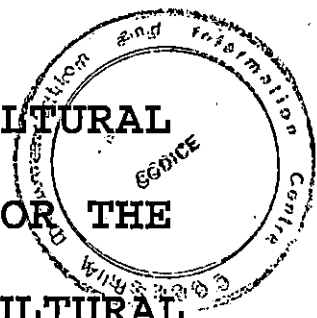
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**OCTOBER, 1997**



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SOCIOLOGY OF RURAL WOMEN AGRICULTURAL  
LABOUR GROUPS AND IMPLICATION FOR THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF ABAKALIKI AGRICULTURAL



ZONE OF EBONYI STATE

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OCTOBER, 1997

SOCIOLOGY OF RURAL WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOUR  
GROUPS AND IMPLICATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
ABAKALIKI AGRICULTURAL ZONE OF EBONYI STATE

A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA.

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.Sc.) IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION.

By

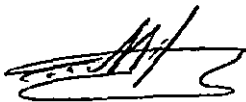
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OCTOBER, 1997

## CERTIFICATION

Obieri, Anthonia Uzoamaka, a Postgraduate Student in the Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, with registration number, PG/M/Sc./93/14277, has satisfactorily completed the requirements for course and research work for the Degree of Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Agricultural Extension (Rural Sociology).

The work embodied, in this project report is original, and has not been submitted in part or full for any other Diploma or Degree of this or any other University.



.....  
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(HEAD OF DEPARTMENT)



.....  
DR. A.C. ANYANWU  
(PROJECT SUPERVISOR)

**DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated with deepest affection to my late parents Mr and Mrs Iloso Obieri.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I sincerely thank my project supervisor, Dr. A.C. Anyanwu, for his relentless efforts towards the successful completion of this study. My warm appreciation also goes to Dr. E.M. Igbokwe, the candid advice and attention enjoyed from him is still green in my memory. I am grateful to all my lecturers for their useful contributions. I thank my good friends Mrs Joy Okparaojiaku, Fidelis Orogbe, Benjamin Isife and Benjamin Okpukpara, for their moral support. I also express my deep gratitude to my younger sister, Perpetua Obieri for her care.

Of course, this work is not complete without mentioning Emmanuel Okporie, darling, you know all I want to say because, you did it all just for my sake.

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God bless you all.

Obieri, A.U.

## ABSTRACT

Shortage of labour has been traced variously to lack of money to hire labour, increased enrolment of youth into schools, as well as rural-urban migration of a more productive labour force. This study aimed at studying the roles of women groups in agricultural production in Abakaliki zone of Ebonyi State. The study covered three Local Government Areas: Ohaukwu, Abakaliki and Izzi. A total of 90 women groups and non-group members were sampled for the study. Frequency scores, percentages, means and factor analysis were used for data analysis. The result shows that women groups have been existing before Nigeria's Independence to uphold certain functions. However, there was no particular rule for the formation since two or more women who are in dynamic interrelation with one another can form a group. The criteria for membership in a group is determined by the composition of the members of such groups. The formal groups have constitutions, objectives and officials to sustain their groups but the informal groups do not have such, as a result of this they disengage after each farming season. It was found that women's labour constituted about 84% of the total labour used in farm operation even though more of women's time is used for domestic chores and child care. As a result of

this women resorted to exchange labour groups which offers them economics of time. Moreso, women in groups have more access to agricultural information. In addition, group facilitate adoption of new techniques. However, it was found that appropriate technology, land, time, mobility and education were general constraints to women farmers.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 THE PROBLEM

The formation of rural women agricultural labour groups is important as an effective production resource for rural progress. This has become obvious because labour is a major limiting resource in smallholder farms. It accounts for over 70 percent of the total cost of production in most farming operations in rural settings (Okorji and Obiechina, 1985; Nweke and Winch, 1980). Labour shortages at the peak periods of farming have been the greatest spur to mechanization. These periods are during land preparation, planting, weeding and harvesting depending on crop type. However, Kline *et al.* (1969) observed that obstacles to mechanization such as fragmentation of land and high cost of engine-powered machines have not been easy to overcome due to farmers' poor financial background. Thus groups are performance machines (Forsyth, 1990). Most of the work in the rural area is done by people in groups rather than individuals working in isolation.

The farm family is the most important source of unpaid labour (Ezedinma, 1993). However, family labour is not often available in the right quantity and at the right time. This is

as a result of decline in polygamy, increased members of the family seeking for education and off-farm employment as well as rural-urban migration. This situation calls for use of hired labour so that the optimum farm size could be maintained. Nevertheless, the ability of a farmer to embark on use of hired labour depends, among other things, on his financial stand (Ezedinma, 1993). Furthermore, farmers complain that hired labour is scarce, expensive and generally unreliable (Chidebelu and Ezeronye, 1985). Thus, Purvis (1968) suggested that simpler and less capital consuming ways of increasing labour productivity be introduced.

Migration of male labour to urban areas has resulted to shortage of active labour force needed in agriculture. It has increased the involvement of women in agricultural production in rural areas (Dixon, 1983). Hence, women can be used to substitute male labour force in agriculture. Women in Enugu, Anambra, Abia and Imo states no longer regard any of the farming activities as too tedious for them to perform (Uwakah, 1982). Gender specificity of farm-labour is common in African agriculture, when artificial scarcity of labour is created, women usually fill up the gap by increasing their labour requirement in food production activities (Okorji, 1985; Olayide and Atobatele, 1980). Besides, Spencer (1986) remarked

that all gender are involved in all farm operations but women comprise a significant proportion of agricultural labour force and play a vital role in African agriculture.

It is a fact that young men are unwilling to undertake the heavy chores of weeding with simple tools. Hence in measurement of labour input, Nweke (1980) and Okorji (1989) considered a 1:1 ratio of man-day to woman-day because in as much as women might not be able to till soil and make large mounds as efficiently as men, men on the other hand, might not carry out weeding operations as effectively as women. Therefore, rural women agricultural labour groups, both the traditional descent and marriage groups and new ones springing up should be effective sources of available agricultural labour. These groups include exchange work groups, labour co-operatives, church groups, etcetera.

In as much as rural women groups were available source of labour in agricultural production and rural progress, then, the pertinent questions to ask were: What were the years of formation and organisation of women groups? How many hours did women spend on farm work per day? What was the rate of adoption of extension innovations between women group and non-group members? What were the general constraints to rural women farmers in adoption of agricultural innovations?.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The overall purpose of this study was to ascertain the sociology of rural women labour groups and implication for the development of Abakaliki agricultural zone of Ebonyi state. Specifically, the study was designed to ascertain:

- (i) The years of formation, organisation, types, criteria and sustainability of women groups;
- (ii) time spent by women farmers for farm work per day;
- (iii) the rate of adoption between women group and non-group members; and
- (iv) the general constraints to women farmers in adoption of agricultural innovations.

## 1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Shortage of labour has been traced to lack of money to hire labour, increase in school enrolment by youth as well as rural-urban migration of a more productive labour force. Hence, in the absence of any degree of mechanization, agricultural production relied on human force. Besides, Norman (1970) noted that labour availability determined whether farmers adopted the recommended practices.

Thus, the study on role of rural women groups in agricultural production generated information on formation, organisation, functions, criteria for membership,

sustainability of women groups, time spent by women for farm work per day, rate of adoption and general constraints to women farmers in adoption of agricultural innovations. Information obtained from this study should help for future policy formulation on women in agriculture and rural development programmes.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 AGRICULTURE AND LABOUR SITUATION IN NIGERIA

Agricultural labour are grouped into family labour, hired labour and communal labour. Family labour is labour that comes from members of the household. It includes: the man, his wife (wives), children as well as his dependants. However, family labour has been decreasing because of reduction of numbers of family hands on the farm. This is as a result of decline in polygamy, enrolment of children into schools, as well as rural-urban migration of the able-bodied family members.

According to Chidebelu et al. (1981) farm family is the most important source of unpaid labour; however, family labour is not often available in the right quantity and at the right time. This situation calls for use of another type of labour called hired labour to correct the short fall. Nevertheless, Ezedinma (1993) observed that use of hired labour is mostly as a result of inability of family labour to meet up with increased demand of labour especially during the peak periods of farming. He noted that the ability of a farmer to embark on use of hired labour depends, among other things, on financial stand of the farmer. Hired labour solves the problem of non-

availability of labour in rural farming household of African farmers but that the solution to this problem was further constrained by the financial strains on the part of the farmer (Alimba, 1990).

Barnum and Squire (1979) identified another type of agricultural labour as communal labour. According to them, communal labour depends on the ability of the farmer to belong to a particular age grade or associations that could organise exchange labour or work gang. Communal labour involves supplementing family labour with that of kinsmen or members of the farmer's age grades (Okorji and Obiechina, 1985). Communal labour could be rotatory and payment is made by providing food, drinks and accepting to work in similar manner for those who helped (Moore, 1975). In other words, within the system of family labour a number of farmers may help one another on a sort of relay system. Usually, no money passed between them for such reciprocal services; each farmer supplied his friends and their families with food when they visit his farm.

Labour shortage at critical seasons has been the greatest spur to mechanization. It is observed that mechanization is an essential element for increasing production. However, according to Kline et al. (1969) among the many problems in introducing tractors and other engine-powered machinery into

Nigeria, one of the most troublesome is the small-sized holdings of individual farms. This problem is aggravated by extreme fragmentation of holdings into odd-shaped individual plots where it is difficult to operate large engine-powered equipment efficiently and economically. Another obstacle to mechanization is the high cost of machinery beyond the reach of all but a few farmers. This, involves developing an appropriate technology that would make it cheaper for jobs to be created in large numbers.

## 2.2 RURAL WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Women participate in almost all agricultural activities along side men. The division between men's jobs and women's jobs has been eroding in Nigeria. Many tasks that were formerly considered men's jobs, are now being done by both men and women (Spencer and Byerlee, 1977). Norman (1970) noted that labour availability determines whether farmers adopt the recommended practices. Thus, a lack of labour for the farm operations dominated by women was the factor limiting farm expansion under existing technologies. According to him, most of the improved farming methods proposed by researchers would increase the demand for women's labour. Olayide and Atobetele (1980) stressed that women folk constitute an important live

wire of small farming in Nigeria.

Women play a significant role in the production, processing and marketing of agricultural production (Okorji and Okereke, 1990). Similarly, Azikiwe (1992) sees rural women as food producers, processors, transporters and marketers. They therefore possess the potential resources for rural and national development. She pointed out that any nation that underestimates the participation and contributions of the rural women to agriculture and food production is bound to experience a snail speed development. Women's labour in agriculture is very important to any nation (Coughenour and Swanson, 1983).

### 2.3 SOCIOLOGY OF WOMEN AND GROUP DYNAMICS

Sociology, according to Otite and Ogionowo (1979) is the study of social aggregates and groups. It studies man, the consequences of his being a member of Society. Rural Sociology as a part of general sociology is the study of rural social process, patterns and organisations and how social and cultural factors affect the lives of agrarian communities. Sociology concentrates on relations within and between groups. It seeks to understand the conditions that promote social conflict and stability, the forces that strengthen or weaken groups and the sources of social change.

A group is any number of people who are held together by mutual interest or dependent on one another and are set apart from others by their relationships and expectations. A group is an aggregation of two or more people who are to some degree in dynamic interrelation with one another (McGrath, 1984).

The quality of life in rural communities is directly influenced by local agricultural producers; and the well being of agricultural producers is affected by their rural communities. Rural communities are the service and the shopping centres for agricultural producers. Group life is very adaptive, for it satisfies many of our most basic survival, psychological, informational, interpersonal, and collective needs.

Women have special ardour for sustaining female work groups (Shepher and Tiger, 1983). Groups are formed when individuals pool their individual efforts in the pursuit of a collective goal (Zander, 1985). In some cases, groups are formed spontaneously when several people recognise that they can accomplish a desired goal more successfully, more efficiently and with more enjoyment, if they work together. Groups are formed when the task to be done is too big for one worker and can be completed or can be done more cheaply, quickly or better if taken up by several colleagues. Groups

make it easier to attain our goals.

For practical purposes, a good size for a work group is somewhere between six and ten members. Below this, the group can lose its dynamism and become much more akin to an observed personal counselling session, which may not be quite what the members had in mind. With more than ten members, it becomes increasingly difficult to keep track of the flow of events, the formation of sub-groups, and to ensure "fair shares for all" (Nicholas and Jenkinson, 1991).

#### 2.4 ROLE OF GROUPS IN TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND ADOPTION

One of the potential advantages of the formation of agricultural co-operatives was that they provided useful channels for propagating ideas for improvement of methods of cultivation and marketing (Okereke, 1970). Obibuaku (1983) noted that among the importance of group farmers is their help in the rapid dissemination of agricultural information. The governments of many African countries have channelled their agricultural development efforts through farmers' co-operatives. Ijere (1992) noted that co-operatives encourage social interaction which results in the cross fertilization of ideas, of methods or techniques on crop or livestock production. Ihimodu (1988) stressed that it is easier and cheaper for extension workers to make contact with group

farmers than with individual operators.

## 2.5 GENERAL CONSTRAINTS TO WOMEN FARMERS

Women's access to agricultural extension and their ability to comprehend and use technical information is compromised when they lack basic education. Studies supported by the World Bank have demonstrated the critical link between farmer efficiency and farmer education (Jamison and Lau, 1982). Moreover, the time and energy involved in providing the family with food, fuel and water leave little time to participate in regular extension programmes and inhibit women's ability to respond to opportunities. Women's dual roles and the relatively inflexibility of domestic chores, such as family meal preparation, require that extension planners consider carefully the timing and scheduling of extension contact to allow more women to participate. Available data in Kenya indicated that women spend one-third of working hours on food preparation and child care which stretches their working day to 13-14 hours (World Bank, 1989). In parts of Somalia, women spend an average of 8 hours a day collecting fuel and water, 4 hours on food preparation and 2 hours on household chores. Only after 14 hours spent completing these tasks do they have time for their own farming activities or extension programmes.

The increased enrolment of children into schools has increased the work load of family income during farming season since households must produce both subsistence crops and export crops in order to meet their new obligations (taxes and school fees) and purchase imports and manufactured goods.

Saito and Weidemann (1990) observed that women are bypassed by formal credit systems for a number of reasons, such as lack of collateral (usually land title), need for a male co-signer, lower level of literacy, numeracy and general education, lack of information, distance and cost of travel to credit institutions, and the small scale of many women's operations. Women farmers who cannot afford inputs and who cannot pay for hired labour are less likely to be interested in extension activities; likewise extension agents are less likely to target this group because of their inability to respond to recommendations to purchase inputs and additional labour.

Women are also less mobile, because they have less cash for transportation and less likelihood of owing transport (Spring, 1985).

## 2.6 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

Enwezor (1984) observed that the small scale agricultural activity of rural women is more vital in ensuring food



security than the large scale mechanized food production. In view of this, Forsyth (1990) supported that in the absence of mechanization, groups become performance machines. Thus, Figure 1 describes the role of rural women groups in agricultural production.

In block A [Agricultural organisation context] there are existing farm operations, such as land preparation, weeding, fertilizer application and harvesting; there is also agricultural information and women groups both traditional descent and marriage origins. In order to perform the farm operations and disseminate extension information, women form groups in block B [group design] to exchange labour. These groups facilitate social interaction (Ijere, 1992) and group norms about performance process.

Block C [women and group work] is a function of block B. Women's ardour for group work will assist the group to interact in the way that they accomplish desired goal (farm labour). Thus, they work cheaply and quickly.

However, the positive result of this depends on block D when the material resources such as appropriate technology, credit, extension services and farm inputs required to accomplish the work effectively and on time are available. On the other hand if the material resources in block D<sub>1</sub> are,

absent as a result of  $D_2$  adoption will be hindered.

The positive output is shown in block E [Group effectiveness]. Thus women groups provide more than half of the agricultural labour in rural farming household (Reimer, 1986). In addition, agricultural innovation disseminates easily through groups (Obibuaku, 1983). This will lead to increased adoption and diffusion of agricultural innovations. Besides, capability of members to work together in the future is maintained or strengthened.

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# THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

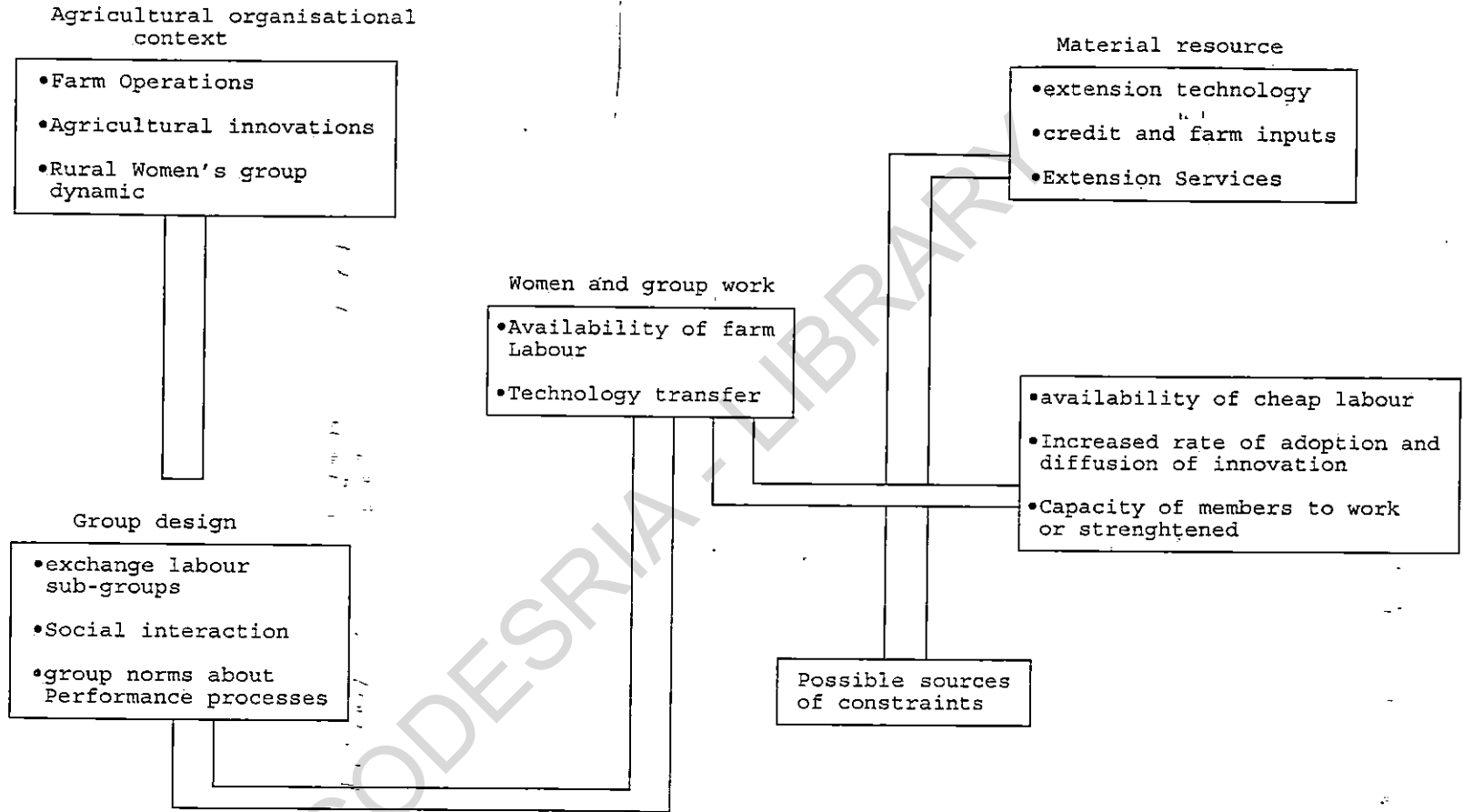


Figure I: Normative Model of group effectiveness Adapted from: Hackman, 1987.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

The target population was all the women groups and non-group members in the six Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Abakaliki zone, Ebonyi state. These LGAs were Ishielu, Ohaukwu, Abakaliki, Izzi, Ezza and Ikwo.

#### SAMPLE SIZE

Three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were purposively selected for the study. They were Ohaukwu, Abakaliki and Izzi. A list of women groups were obtained from the office of Women Commission in the LGAs involved. From each of the three LGAs, three communities and three Women groups were selected by simple random sampling techniques. Hence, nine communities and nine women groups, made of up seven formal and two informal women groups, were chosen, ensuring that no two groups were selected from one community. From each of the formal groups, five women comprising the president, secretary and three non-official members were selected while five women were selected from each of the informal groups. Hence, 45 women group members were randomly selected.

Similarly, 45 non-group members from the chosen nine

communities were randomly selected. Thus, a total of 90 respondents made up the sample size for the study.

### 3.2 INSTRUMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

Participant observation, focus group discussion and appraisal of the group's record where available were used to collect data for objective 1. Interview schedule was designed to elicit information for objectives 2,3 and 4. A three-point Likert type scale with values of 3,2 and 1 was used for objectives 2 and 3 while a five-point Likert type scale with values of 5,4,3,2 and 1 was used for objective 4, to determine the magnitude of expressed variables.

### 3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Objectives 1,2 and 3 were analyzed using frequency scores, percentages and means, while factor analysis technique was used for objective 4. The three-point Likert type scale with values of 3,2 and 1 were added up to give 6. The 6 was divided by 3 to obtain 2.00 which was regarded as the mean. Hence, any mean response equal or above 2.00 was important, whereas any mean response below 2.00 was regarded as not important. Similarly, for objective 4, Kaiser's criterion, using factor loading above 0.30 in naming and interpreting the factors and constraint variables was adopted (Child, 1978 and Ogūnfiditimi, 1979).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 FORMATION OF RURAL WOMEN GROUPS

It was observed that Women groups have been existing in the study area before Nigeria's independence as shown in table 1. However, there was no documented procedure for formation of any type of these groups. According to Ede (1995) various women groups were formed for different purposes and a woman can belong to as many groups as she wished. According to Mbam (1995) two or more women who have mutual interest(s) such as labour, trade or religion can form a group to achieve their desired goals. This agrees with the findings of McGrath (1984); that two or more people who are, to some degree, in dynamic interrelation with one another can form a group.

Table 1: Distribution of Women Groups According to Years of Formation

LGAs	Community	Name of Women's Group	Population	Year of Formation
Ohaukwu	Ezzangbo Ngbo Effium	Chetachi Women group	108	1961
		Methodist women group	270	1976
		Effium women weavers	42	1989
Abakaliki	Ishieke / / Nkaliki Unuhu	Oganiru women group	13	1994
		Catholic women organisation	326	1973
	Amagu	Igwebuike age grade	284	1974
Izzi	Ndieze	Nwannedinamba women group	21	1993
	Igbeagu	Obioma women group	232	1969
	Agbaja	Afodimkpa women group	7	1994

It was also observed that some of the groups have written constitutions, set objectives, officials, time-scheduled meetings at known venues and dress uniforms to identify their members during ceremonial gatherings.

#### ORGANISATION OF WOMEN GROUP

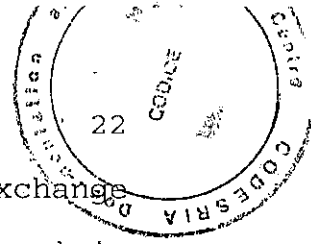
It was perceived that various types of women groups have usually been organised in the study area, both for the physical advantages of extra help on laborious tasks and social pleasure of working together. Aleke (1995) explained that various formal women groups uphold different functions; nevertheless, some of the informal groups may focus on a single activity as presented in Table 2. Subsequently, women

Table 2. Distribution of Women Groups According to Types and Functions

Name of Group	Types	Functions
Chetechi Women	Kinsfolk (formal)	1) to exchange labour 2) to mobilize savings 3) Social and ceremonial purpose
Methodist Women	Church women (formal)	1) to exchange labour 2) Social and ceremonial purposes 3) development of the church
Effium women weavers	Better life for rural women (formal)	1) for better life programmes 2) Social and ceremonial purposes 3) Mobilize savings/credits
Oganiru women	Co-wives (informal)	1) To exchange labour 2) for self help contribution (Esusu)
Catholic women organisation	Church women (formal)	1) group labour for the church 2) Social and ceremonial purposes 3) Mobilize savings
Igwebuikwe women	Age grade (formal)	1) Community development 2) Settlement of disputes 3) Social and ceremonial purposes 4) to exchange labour
Nwannedinamba	Nativity (formal)	1) Social and Ceremonial purposes 2) to exchange labour
Obioma women	Umuada (formal)	1) Settlement of disputes 2) Community developments 3) to exchange labour
Afodimkpa	Peer group (informal)	1) for self help contribution (Esusu) 2) to exchange labour

in the larger associations organised themselves into sub-groups of two to four in the case of informal groups and about





five to ten women in the case of formal groups, to exchange labour. These sub-groups willingly meet regularly and work in rotation on member's farms. This is in line with Von-Braun and Webb (1987) who observed that labour pooling among women is very common.

**CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP IN WOMEN EXCHANGE LABOUR GROUPS.**

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which certain characteristic factors were important as criteria for women's exchange labour group membership. The mean distribution of the responses is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Mean Distribution of Respondents Based on Criteria for Membership in Women Exchange Labour Groups.

	Criteria for Membership	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )
(i)	Occupation	2.98
(ii)	Nativity	2.57
(iii)	Marital Status	2.51
(iv)	Age	2.43
(v)	Religion	2.11
(vi)	Education	1.64

According to the table, occupation (2.98) seemed to be important for membership in exchange labour groups. This could be because these women have farming as their occupation.

Invariably, women farmers organise exchange labour groups to provide cheap labour.

Similarly, nativity (2.57) was perceived important as criteria for membership. All women who are "daughters of the soil" by birth form a group, while all women who married outside their towns, states or countries form their own groups when they eventually identify themselves in their new towns, states, or countries by marriage. They usually call the group "Nwannedinamba", meaning (sisterhood in a foreign land).

Also, age (2.43) and marital status (2.51) were to some extent important. Invariably, women form exchange labour groups when farming activities to be done are too big for one woman but can be done more cheaply, quickly or better if taken up by several colleagues.

Furthermore, religion (2.11) could only be important in church group membership as women in different churches form denominational groups. However, education was generally not important in any of the groups. This could be that women in the study groups had little formal education. It could also be that as educational level of a woman increases, she may resort to hired labour or leave farming for off-farm employment.

## SUSTAINABILITY OF RURAL WOMEN GROUPS

Shepher and Tiger (1983) noted that women have special ardour for sustaining female work groups. Thus, the women in the study area used certain measures as shown in Table 4 to sustain their groups.

Table 4. Mean Distribution of measures for sustainability of Women Groups.

	Measures for sustainability	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )
1.	Admission of new members	3.76
2.	Selection of officials	3.00
3.	Contribution of money and payment of levies for community development	2.78
4.	Written constitution and set objectives for the members	2.76
5.	Punishment of defaulters	2.37
6.	Payment of fine for absenteeism	2.27

It was observed from Table 4 that women in the study groups used admission of new members (3.76) and selection of officials (3.00) to a great extent to sustain their groups. The women in these groups elect new officials every year. Subsequently, new members are admitted into the groups, hence many people come and go but the associations continue to exist.

Also, contribution of money and payment of levies for community development (2.78), written constitution and set objectives were used to some extent to sustain groups. It was explained that these women use the money they contributed to build and maintain community facilities such as clinics, streams or boreholes, roads, bridges, village squares, halls and markets.

However, the table shows that compulsory attendance at meetings or payment of fine (2.27) and punishment of defaulters were used to a little extent by the groups.

#### 4.2 TIME ALLOCATION AND WOMEN'S AVAILABILITY FOR FARM WORK

The respondents (both group and non-group members) were asked to indicate approximate hours they spend on farm work per day. The distribution of the responses is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Percentage Distribution of Respondents according to time Spent on Farm Work Per Day. N = 90

Approximate hour/day	%
< 2	10.0
2 - 4	18.9
5 - 7	48.9
8 - 10	15.6
> 10	6.6
Total	100.0

As shown in the table above, 28.9% of the respondents work for about four hours or less per day while nearly 64.5% of the respondents spent between five and ten hours. Similarly, about 6.6% work for more than ten hours per day. This could be attributed to women's dual roles and the relative inflexibility of domestic chores, such as family meal preparation and child care which according to World Bank (1989) stretches their working day to 13 - 14 hours.

Table 6. Mean Distribution of Group Members According to Their Degree of Participation In Farm Work.

S/No	Farm operations	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )
1	Land clearing	2.69
2	Mound making	1.33
3	Planting	2.76
4	Weeding	2.87
5	Fertilizer application	1.91
6	Bird scaring in rice field	1.07
7	Harvesting	1.24

Earlier studies by Uwaka (1982) revealed that women in Anambra and Imo States no longer regard any of the farming activities as too tedious for them to perform. Similarly, Table 6 shows that women groups in Abakaliki zone of Ebonyi State participated in nearly all the farm operations; however, they participated to a great extent in land clearing (2.69), planting (2.76) and weeding (2.87). According to Ohuegbe (1989) land clearing, planting and weeding constituted about 84% of the total labour used in farm operations. Usually, no money passed between the members for such reciprocal services. Each woman supplied her friends with food when they visited her farm and accepts to work in similar manner for other

members (Moore, 1975).

#### 4.3 RATE OF ADOPTION BETWEEN GROUP AND NON-GROUP MEMBERS

The respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of the Extension Agent's visits to them per month, their other sources of extension information and the degree to which they (farmers) used the existing innovations. The distribution of the responses are shown in Tables 7,8 and 9, respectively.

Table 7. - Percentage Distribution of Extension Agent's Visits per month. N = 90

Respondents	Visits by Extension Agents		
	Fortnightly	Once in three weeks	Once in a month
Women group members	46.7	37.7	15.6
Non-group members	28.9	13.3	57.8

According to the table, some women in the study area had more contacts with extension agents than others. The table shows that of those who indicated they had contact with extension agents, 46.7%, 37.7% and 15.6% of the group members were visited fortnightly, once in three weeks and once a month, respectively. Similarly, 28.9%, 13.3% and 57.8% of the non-group members, respectively, were visited fortnightly, once in three weeks and once a month. It could be that the Block Extension Agents (BEAS) who disseminate agricultural

information on Women in Agriculture (WIA) activities, made frequent visits to women group members than non-group members.

Table 8. Percentage Distribution of Other Sources of Extension Information to Women Farmers. N = 90

Source of Information		Group members	Non-group members
i)	Husband	20	24
ii)	Neighbours	11	16
iii)	Friends	7	56
iv)	Women groups	62	4
Total		100	100

According to Table 8, the most important sources of information for group and non-group members are respectively, the groups (62.0%) and friends (56.0%). This agrees with findings by Aloa (1971) that individuals are more likely to be exposed to communication messages related to farm innovations more than other counterparts due to group dynamic effects.



Table 9: Mean Distribution of Frequency of Use of Innovations by Group and Non-Group Members

S/No.	Existing innovations	Group member	Non-Group member
		$\bar{X}$	$\bar{X}$
1	Cassava/maize intercropping	3.00	2.87
2	Upland rice production techniques	3.00	2.89
3	Cassava-fufu processing techniques	2.91	2.82
4	Cassava/rice intercropping	2.84	2.76
5	Soybean processing techniques	2.8	2.58
6	Soap making technology	2.67	2.53
7	Rabbit production technology	2.53	2.22
8	Cocoyam flour processing techniques	2.24	2.04
9	Yam minisett techniques	1.71	1.33
10	Alternate Row cropping	1.36	1.29

Table 9 shows that both group and non group members nearly make frequent use of the existing innovations (1 to 8) but that the group members make more frequent use of them than the non group members. This is in line with Ijere (1992) who observed that groups facilitate adoption of new techniques. Also, Saito and Weidenmann (1990) found that group settings encourage otherwise reluctant extension clients to adopt new ideas.

However, the existing innovations 9 and 10 were seldom used by both group and non-group members. According to Meier

(1984), it could be that innovations 9 and 10 were not relevant and suited to the needs of the women farmers.

#### 4.4 GENERAL CONSTRAINTS TO WOMEN FARMERS

The constraints to women's adoption of extension innovations is shown in Table 10. Based on the item loading, Factor 1 was named "inaccessibility of production resources" and Factor 2 was named "women's socio-economic status". Thus, the two represent major constraints to women farmers.

The table shows that lack of basic education (0.41) constrained women's adoption of new techniques. According to Jamison and Lau (1982), there is a critical link between farmer efficiency and farmer education. Invariably, the impact of education on efficiency is likely to be strong when modern as opposed to traditional agricultural techniques are introduced. Also, lack of appropriate technology (0.59) impairs women's adoption of extension innovations. Subsequently, this is aggravated by lack of needed farm inputs (0.66). Women farmers who cannot afford needed inputs are less likely to be interested in extension activities; likewise extension agents are less likely to target this group because of their inability to respond to recommendations to purchase needed inputs.

Table 10: Varimax Rotated Constraint Factors To Rural Women's Adoption of Extension Innovations

S/No	Constraint Variables	Inaccessibility of production resources (Factor 1)	Women's socio-economic status (Factor 2)
1	Basic education by women	0.41	-0.05
2	Time for extension programmes	0.01	0.84
3	Income by women	-0.16	0.20
4	Women's lack of farming experience	-0.21	0.07
5	Availability of needed farm inputs	0.66	0.02
6	Inaccessibility of woman to land	0.04	0.34
7	Increased enrolment of youths into schools	0.07	0.05
8	Appropriate technology	0.59	-0.12
9	Inadequate extension services	0.08	0.05
10	Transport facility	0.03	0.31

On the other hand, lack of time (0.84) due to conflict in household demand also constrain women farmers. According to Spring (1985), the time required in providing the family with food, fuel and water leaves little time to women. This is worsened by inaccessibility of land by women (0.31). Spring (1985) also noted that plots allocated to African women are far from their villages. As a result of this, child care is difficult when fields are far. Subsequently, this is aggravated by lack of transport facility (0.31). According to

Saito and Weidenmann (1990) women are less mobile because they have less cash for transportation and less likelihood of owing transport. Thus, these factors not only reduce women's yields through diseconomies of scale, but causes extension agents to dismiss women as non-adopters.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 SUMMARY

The overall purpose of this study was to ascertain the sociology of rural women labour groups and implication for the development of Abakaliki agricultural zone of Ebonyi state. The specific objectives were to ascertain the years of formation and organisational structures of rural women groups, time allocation and women's availability for farm work, rate of adoption between groups and non-group members and the general constraints to women farmers.

The target population were all the women group and non-group members in the six Local Government Areas in Abakaliki zone. However, three Local Government Areas were purposively selected and a sample size of 90 respondents comprising both group and non-group members were randomly selected for the study.

Interview schedule and focus group discussions were used for data collection. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze objectives 1, 2 and 3 while factor analysis techniques was used for objective 4.

The result showed that Women's groups, both formal and informal, had existed before and after Nigeria's independence, to exchange labour, mobilize savings, settle disputes and for community developments. However, there was no documented procedure for group formation. Thus two or more women who are to some degree, in dynamic interrelation with one another can form a group. The result also revealed that these groups had different criteria for membership in their various groups. In addition, they use certain measures to sustain these groups.

It was found that women farmers in the study area had less hours for farm work. As a result of this they form groups to exchange labour. They participated in nearly all the farm operations.

Furthermore, it was found that women group members had more contacts with extension agents than the non-group members. Similarly, women group members make frequent use of existing innovations more than the non-group members. However, lack of basic education, time, income, land, needed farm inputs and appropriate technology constrained women farmers.

## 5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The findings in this study confirmed that women form groups to provide cheap labour. Also women in groups had more

contacts with extension agents than the non-group women. As a result of this, they had more access to agricultural information and technology. The implication of this study is that women, generally, should join groups or form new ones to provide cheap labour, maximize farmer-to-agent ratios by disseminating information through their groups. Invariably, groups can be particularly effective in reinforcing knowledge among illiterate women farmers, who can then rely on collective memory.

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to enhance women's participation in extension programmes:

1. Women farmers should form exchange labour groups to provide cheap labour.
2. Due to conflict in household demands, women farmers usually had less hours for farm work, therefore extension planners should consider carefully the timing and scheduling of extension contacts to allow more women to participate.
3. More female Block Extension Agents (BEAS) should be employed to disseminate Agricultural information on Women in Agriculture (WIA) activities to allow every Nigerian

woman to participate in Extension Programmes. This is because in some parts of Nigeria, such as the Northern part where men do not like their wives to meet alone with male extension agents, they may have no objection if groups of women meet with the male extension agents or if female BEAS meet with their wives in the "Puda".

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