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## EVALUATION OF WOMEN'S AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION IN UYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

Women play important roles in environmental protection and conservation, the present day environmental protection cannot be solved with the involvement of few groups of women, it requires global involvement of the entire community of women folk, hence this study, women's awareness and participation in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The 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 illiterate respondent while for the literate, questionnaires were administered and later retrieved for interpretation. A hundred and twenty (120) copies questionnaires were administered; thirty (30) were administered per clan. Simple statistical tools (frequencies, percentage) and charts were used in data analysis. The results showed that, majority (45.5%) respondent that participated in environmental conservation and protection were married women within the age range of 31-40years. Majorities (42.8%) had their tertiary education, were members of NGO and had the awareness from there. Majorities (27.3%) practiced agro forestry as their environmental conservative measure. 55.5% of respondents confirmed that level of education affect participation while 44.5% argued that it does not affect, (59.1%) said that wealth does not stop participation, 27.3% said it can affect and 13.6% agreed that, wealth can partially affect participation, Majority of respondents (84.6%) said religion was not a barrier to their participating in environmental conservation and protection while 15.5% agreed that, religion partially affected their participation, majority of the respondent (50.9%) said that custom/tradition affect their participation. It is recommended that government should provide alternative source of energy at reduced rate, more awareness through various governmental agencies should be made on the danger of destroying the eco-system and the benefit of participating in environmental conservation and protection.

**Keywords:** Evaluation, awareness, Participation, Environmental conservation, Protection.

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### Introduction

Women around the world play a key role in the protection of biological diversity through their various responsibilities. They have recognized the need not only to protect the bio-diversity, but also to reshape and recreate it. Women not only bear brunt of environmental degradation but also play vital role in its management. Warren (1991)

referred to them as the custodian of the microenvironment. Anyakoha (1999) noted that, women especially those in developing countries have been shown to exhibit a direct relationship with environment. He stressed that, they have over the years shown themselves to be knowledgeable and good environmental managers.



World Bank statistics indicate that women perform two-thirds of world's work and produce more than half of the food in most countries (Allele Williams, 1993). Some women in the developing world are largely responsible for producing and providing food for their family. 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 part of Nigeria, women are both water suppliers and water managers (Oluwohunwa *et al.*, 2009). He noted that women are the over seer of the sanitary arrangements for households and that women are particularly affected by the degradation of environmental diminishing resources. He further stressed that women have shown themselves to be knowledgeable and good environmental managers and that; they have been successful campaigners and leaders for environmental protection. In Nigeria, some women associations and NGO'S like Network for Women in Agriculture and Environment(NWIAE), Association of Women in Forestry and Environment (AWIFE) and many others exist, which their objectives among others is to educate womenfolk and the general public at large of the benefits of conserving and protecting our 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 of participation of womenfolk, of every class/every locality, and any woman should not under estimate her role. It therefore necessary to evaluate the awareness of women and their 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 of Akwa Ibom State. Uyo Local Government is located between latitude 4° 55' and 5° 05' North of the Equator and between longitudes 8° 0' and 7° 50' east of the meridian. It is bounded in the north by Itu Local Government Area, east by Uruan local government area, west by Nsit Ibom and Etinan, north west by Abak, south west by Ibesikpo Asutan and South By Uruan local government area. Etoi, Offot, Oku and Ikono are the four clans in Uyo and were included in the study.

Farming, though predominantly at subsistence level is the occupation of most of the rural people in the study area. The major crops grown are cassava, maize, oil palm tree and cocoyam. Small ruminant like Goat, Sheep, pig and poultry are reared extensively, few people however rear poultry and piggery intensively.

### Sampling Techniques

The samples for the study were randomly selected from the four clans that make up Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The four clans (Etoi, Offot, Oku and Ikono). Oral interview was used to source for information from illiterate respondents while for the literate, questionnaire was administered and later retrieved for interpretation. A hundred and twenty (120) copies of questionnaires were administered, thirty (30) each was administered in the four clans. In each of the four clans, ten (10) households were chosen by simple random sampling, and then out of these ten



households, three (3) respondents were chosen randomly within household.

Focus group discussion (FGD), interview based on the questionnaire prepared, was used to get information from the respondents.

### Data Analysis Procedure

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

### Results and Discussion

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

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Marital Status		
Married	50	45.5
Single	28	25.5
Widow	22	20.0
Divorced	10	9.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>
Age		
20-30	23	20.9
31-40	48	43.7
41-50	31	28.2
51 and above	8	7.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>
Education		
Non-formal education	10	9.1
Primary	22	20.0
Secondary	31	28.2
Tertiary	47	42.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>
Occupation		
Farmer	53	48.2
Artisan	40	36.4
Civil Servant	17	15.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>
Religion		
Christianity	101	91.8
Others	9	8.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>



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. Majority (45.5%) were married, while 25.5% were single, 20% were widow and 9.1% were 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. Majority (43.7%) of the respondent were within the age ranges of 31-40 years while 28.2%, 20.9% and 7.3% were at the age ranges of 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 I majority (42.8%) of the respondents had their tertiary education 28.2%, 20% and 9.1% had their secondary, primary and non formal education

respectively. This result shows the effect of urbanization to the study area. Uyo Local Government Area 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 was 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. Majority of the respondents (48.2%) involved themselves in either full-time or part-time farming while 36.4% and 15.5% were Artisan and civil servants respectively. Christianity was the religion of almost all the respondents. (91.8%) other religions were only 8.2%.

Table 2: Distribution according to level of awareness/ participation of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Awareness (Environmental Conservation and Protection)		
Aware	61	55.5
Not aware	49	44.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>
Source of Information		
Extension Agents	9	8.2
Publications	28	25.5
NGO	35	31.8
Consultant	14	12.7
Mass Media	24	21.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>
Tree Planting Participation		
Participate	61	55.5
Do not participate	49	44.5



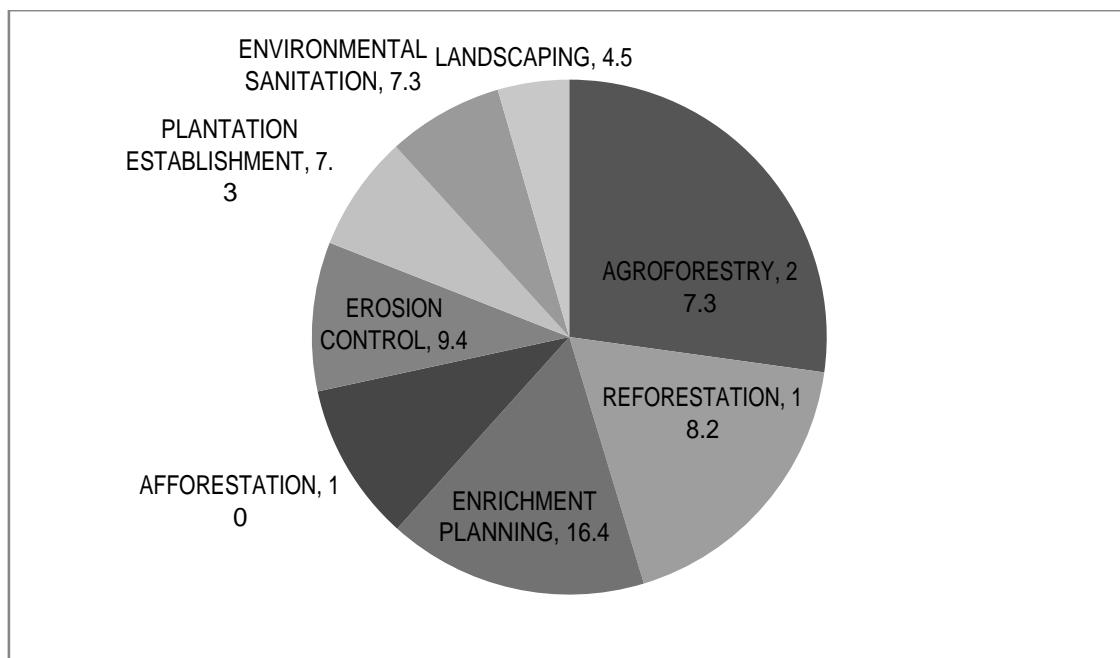
Total	110	100.0
Participation Level/Measures		
Individual	47	42.7
Group	63	57.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>
The Fastest measures		
Group	61	55.5
Individual	49	44.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Tree Planting Periods		
Quarterly	47	42.7
Yearly	49	44.6
Any Period	14	12.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 showed the level of awareness/participation of the respondent in the study area. Majority (55.5%) of the respondents agreed that they were aware of the environmental conservation and protection while 44.5% of the respondents said they were not aware. Majority 31.8% got the information from the NGO, 25.5% read from publications, 21.9% got the information from mass media 12.7% got from consultant and only 8.2% got their information from the extensions agent. This result implies that greater information is gotten from the Non Governmental Organization (NGO).

In Nigeria, and Uyo Local Government Area in particular, the greatest threat to extension service is gross 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, Nwachukwu (2005).

From the result, it is clear that NGO –Based Extension has taken charge of information delivery. Government should look into this.

Majority of respondents (55.5%) participated in tree planting while 44.5% said they do not participate because of lack of time and that they prefer planting flowers to trees. 57.3% respondents said they like planting in group because it is faster while 42.7% plant individually. The relative small size individual farmers operating in Uyo Local Government Area, stimulate them to group together to get jobs done faster and more efficiently in order to realize the utmost from their efforts. This is in accordance with Yamusa and Adefela (2014) finding that with group farming, farm workers gain greater control over the type of technology that will be used and they are more likely to preserve employment opportunities for themselves and their children.



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

Figure 1 show various environmental conservation and protection measures practiced in the study area. Majority of the respondents (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%).

The majority of respondents (27.3%) said 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 apart from maximizing the available land which urbanization in the study area has remain for them has advantages over other conservation measures listed above such as reducing prevalence in insect attack, litter of tree component serves to protect the crops and the system moderates microclimate (Adeola, 2015).

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

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Level of Wealth		
Yes (Affected)	30	27.3
No (Not Affected)	65	59.1



Partially (Affected)	15	13.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

Level of Religion		
Yes(Affected)	-	-
No (Not Affected)	93	84.6
Partially(Affected )	17	15.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

Partner/Spouse Support		
Yes (Support)	62	56.4
No (Do not support)	30	27.3
Partially(Support)	18	16.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

Level of Education		
Affect	61	55.5
Do not affect	49	44.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

Culture/Custom/tradition		
Affect participation	56	50.9
Does not affect	40	36.4
Partially affect	14	12.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

Means of Preparing Meal		
Firewood	41	37.3
Kerosene	44	40.0
Gas Cooker	12	10.9
Solar energy	8	7.3
Electric stove	5	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

If firewood, why?		
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>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

If government makes other



options available at reduced cost,  
will you stop using firewood?

Yes	57	46.4
No	47	42.7
Partially	12	10.9
Total	110	100

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%) said wealth does not stop participation, 27.3% said it can affect and 13.6% agreed 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 their participating in environmental conservation and protection. This result is because of the type of religion (Christianity) practiced by almost all the people in the study area which allows women freedom of movement and participations in public functions, while 15.5% agreed that, religion partially affected their participation. Some respondents in this group are in indigenous religion. This religion recognizes the sacred in trees, stones, groves, specific days of the week or times of the year etc (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 support them, while 16.4% agreed that, their spouses partially support them. In an interview with Mrs. Eno Ibiham, one of the respondents that says the husband does not

support her participation, she said her husband is not literate and is being very possessive. 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% respondents confirmed that level of education affect participation while 44.5% argued that it does not affect. Educated women understand and adopt innovations more than those that are not educated. Majority of respondent (50.9%) said custom/tradition affect 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. Ekong (2010). According to him, women's right to land tends to be mainly derived from marriage (as among the Tiv, Ibo and Ibibio people).

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this work, women, if given appropriate assistance and free access to land, should be able to get fully involved in environmental management, conservation and protection. It is therefore recommended that government should review women's right to land, provide and encourage the use of alternative source of energy at reduced rates in order to discourage women from felling



trees for firewood. More extension workers should be employed so as to create more awareness on good farming practices that are environmentally friendly. Environmental laws should be enforced.

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