

**THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SELECTED WOMEN OCCUPATIONAL
GROUPS TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN EJIGBO AND IFE
CENTRAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS IN OSUN STATE,
NIGERIA**

BY

**FAGBEWESA, ESTHER OLAPEJU
ADP/R/03/04/1708
B.A. (PHE) MPA, OAU, IFE**

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ABSTRACT

The study identified women occupational groups involved in rural development in Ife Central and Ejigbo Local Government Areas, and examined their organisational structure and mode of operations. It also assessed the contributions of the women occupational groups in promoting rural development. This was with a view to identifying the problems confronting and inhibiting these groups in demonstrating their full potentials in rural development.

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through questionnaire and in-depth interviews. Two local governments in Osun State namely, Ife Central and Ejigbo Local Government Areas were purposively selected for the study. Ten occupational groups were also purposively selected, namely, Gari Processors, Palm oil Processors, and Cloth weavers, Hairdressers, Tailors, Yam Sellers, and Provision Sellers, Kolanut Sellers, Jewellery Sellers and Fish Sellers. Two hundred (200) respondents from each of the two local governments were randomly selected for the study. Twenty percent of membership of each group was randomly selected in each local government. In-depth interviews were conducted to seek information from the five executive members from each of these occupational groups namely, the President, Vice President, Secretary, Financial Secretary and the Public Relation Officers who were purposively selected based on their knowledge of the group activities. Secondary data were also obtained from textbooks, journals, and government gazettes. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics.

The results showed that all the occupational groups had uniform organisational structures comprising the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and the Public Relations Officer. In each of the groups, the women leaders were responsible for designing the project, while those that were involved in the implementation and monitoring of the programmes were the committees set up by the group women leaders. However, the study showed that the mode of operations of the groups differed in each of the local governments. For instance, 68% of the respondents in Ile-Ife, indicated that the women groups preferred to meet monthly as opposed to 32% that met weekly. However, in Ejigbo, 93% of the respondents indicated that meetings were held monthly and only 7% preferred weekly meeting. Furthermore, 98% of respondents in Ile-Ife attended meetings regularly while all the respondents in Ejigbo attended meetings regularly. The study also showed that all the groups made monthly contribution. In Ile-Ife, 99.5% of the members made monthly contributions of between N1, 000 to N10, 000, while only about 0.5% made higher contributions. However in Ejigbo, all the members contributed between N1000 and N10, 000. The study revealed that the monthly contributions were used for the

purposes of business (70.4% and 82.9%), projects (8.2% and 5.5%), food (5.6% and 1.5%), and payment of school fees (15.8% and 5%) for Ife Central and Ejigbo Local Government Areas respectively. Activities performed by the groups also varied from construction of Town Halls and establishment of Cooperative loans (79.4% and 82.6%), to construction of Gari processing factory (10.6% and 9.2%) and construction of Palm Oil processing factory (10.1% and 8.2%) for Ife and Ejigbo Local Government Areas, respectively. The major challenges confronting the groups were financial (99.4% and 99%) for each of the local government areas respectively. The result also showed that the local communities were not adequately involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of projects.

The study concluded that the contributions of women occupational groups to rural development were constrained mostly by finance, inadequate project monitoring process, and non involvement of the target groups in the determination of projects to be established for women.