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## Strategies for Effective Administration of Environmental Education for Rural Women in Enugu State of Nigeria

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## **Strategies for Effective Administration of Environmental Education for Rural Women in Enugu State of Nigeria**

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### ***Abstract***

*In the modern science and technology age, the demand on environment can no longer be maintained by haphazard traditional conservation practices. Consequently, there is a need for a more conscious and deliberate form of conservation that will bring about more effective environmental use. This study calls for strategies for effective administration of environmental education for rural women in Enugu State of Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. The study population consists of 5,658 rural women from 110 autonomous communities, and the sample is made up of 1,400 rural women selected through a multi-stage random sampling technique. The Rural Women Environmental Education Needs Assessment Questionnaire is used to collect data, and the mean and standard deviation were deployed to analyze research questions. The study findings show that rural women in Enugu State of Nigeria require a wide range of environmental education knowledge, skills and attitudes for effective execution of environmental education. The study recommends that government, through its appropriate agents, should initiate effective programs for creating mass awareness by involving rural women on conservation and preservation measures.*

**Keywords:** Environmental education, traditional conservation, rural women and preservation measures

### **Introduction**

At present, the society has become increasingly sophisticated and education has been formalized. In this day and age, there is a need for a well-structured environmental education with well-articulated aims and objectives. The effective administration of such a program especially in a typical rural sector where most women are illiterate could be a problem. Therefore, sufficient effort is needed to fashion out an easy way for effective administration of environmental education.

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Environmental education is the process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate inter-relatedness among man, his culture and his biophysical surroundings (Nead & Joy, 1994). It does not restrict itself to value recognition but also entails practices in decision making and self-formulation of a code of behavior about issues concerning environmental quality.

Consequently, the need arises that women, especially the ones living in rural areas ought to form a primary target group for environmental education. In the first place, women in most rural societies especially in Africa, manage subsistence (Heathote and Thomas, 1997). This role, according to Heathote and Thomas, is not limited to the management of household and community services but also encompasses the management of environmental resources. In Enugu State of Nigeria, the life of women is closely dependent on the natural environment. First through their economic and household work, the rural women are in daily contract with the various resources of the environment upon which they depend for survival. They depend on land to grow crops, water for cooking, washing and drinking, and on the forest for food, fuel wood, medicine and a host of other products which are their major sources of income, and livelihood. So, women have sustained interaction with environmental resources.

By such a sustained interaction with environmental resources, rural women have profound impact on the environment and are in turn deeply affected by changes in it. While it has become a common knowledge that rural women are directly dependent on their local environment, it is equally obvious that they are the hardest hit by environmental deterioration. The energy consumption habit of rural women is highly subsistence. They depend on firewood as their fuel supply for cooking, heating and lighting of their homes. Studies carried out by Echolm (1984) and Cecelski (1986), have shown that firewood also known as fuel wood accounts for over 90 percent of natural energy consumption of most African countries and about 80 percent even in oil-rich Nigeria. The health hazard which these women suffer from the use of fuel wood is debilitating.

For these and other resources, the rural women are recognized as a special target group for effective administration of environmental education. These rural women need an educational program that would take into consideration their peculiar learning characteristics.

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the strategies for effective administration of environmental education for rural women in Enugu State of Nigeria. Specifically, the study examines the level of participation of rural women in environmental education in Enugu State. It also investigates the planning strategies for enhancing rural women's knowledge for environmental education. Moreover, the study suggests the administrative strategies for effective administration of environmental education in Enugu State of Nigeria.

The study is limited to strategies for effective administration of environmental education to rural women in Enugu State. The following research questions guided the study:

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1. What are the levels of participation of rural women in environmental education in Enugu State?
2. What are the planning strategies for enhancing rural women's knowledge for environmental education in Enugu State?
3. What are the strategies for effective administration of environmental education in Enugu State?

### **Research Method**

The researcher adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Enugu State of Nigeria, which has six education zones, namely: Enugu, Agbani, Awgu, Udi, Obollo, and Nsukka.

The population for the study consists of all the women in autonomous communities in Enugu State. There are 396 autonomous communities in 17 local government areas (LGAs) as presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Distribution of Autonomous Communities by Education Zones in Enugu State**

<b>S/No.</b>	<b>Education Zone</b>	<b>No. of LGAs</b>	<b>No. of Autonomous Communities</b>
1	Nsukka	3	74
2	Udi	2	71
3	Enugu	3	21
4	Awgu	3	74
5	Agbani	2	67
6	Obollo	4	89
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>396</b>

Table 1 shows the distribution of education zones and the selected communities for the study. A simple random sampling was used to select two out of the six education zones in the state. They are Udi and Nsukka zones.

**Table 2: Distribution of Autonomous Communities by selected LGA**

Education Zones	No. of LGAs	No. of Autonomous Communities	Study Sample 10% of the Population
Nsukka	3	74	8
Udi	2	71	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>16</b>

Table 3 below shows the number of registered women groups. They were selected from the 16 autonomous communities in Udi and Nsukka.

**Table 3: Population and Sample of Subjects for the Study**

Sample of Autonomous Communities	No. of Women Groups	Total No. of Members	25% of Sample Members
Ukehe	5	597	149
Ekwegbe	6	237	59
Lejja	5	240	60
Alor-Uno	5	250	63
Ugbene	4	165	42
Nkpologwu	6	576	147
Uvuru	4	182	45
Obimo	3	226	57
Opi	6	135	34
Okpatu	6	670	168
Egede	9	1,196	299
Abor	4	260	65
Umu-Mba-Ndiuno	3	240	60
Imezi-Owa	4	190	48
Obeleagu Umuna	3	180	45
Agu-obu-owa	3	235	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>5,658</b>	<b>1,400</b>

So, from the above, a total of 1,400 rural women were involved in the study. Copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher to the rural women on meeting days. It is

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pertinent to note here that the mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the three research questions.

**Research Question 1:** What are the levels of participation of rural women in Enugu State towards environmental education?

**Table 4: Mean Ratings ( $\bar{x}$ ) and Standard Deviation (SD) of Rural Women on Level of Participation towards Environmental Education (EE)**

S/No.	Level of Participation of Rural Women Toward EE	( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Interpretation
1	All rural women make it a duty in telling people to maintain clean environment	3.13	99	Agree
2	I belong to community vanguard against bush burning	3.09	1.04	Agree
3	I belong to community vanguard against unauthorized soil excavation	3.25	96	Agree
4	Most rural women partake in cleaning sources of water supply	3.19	1.01	Agree

Table 4 reveals that all items on this section on the level of participation of rural women towards environmental education were agreed upon by the respondents. This is because the mean ratings were 3.13 for item 1, 3.09 for item 2, 3.25 for item 3, and 3.19 for item 4. This implies that the rural women make it their duty in telling people to maintain clean environment by belonging to vanguards against bush burning, unauthorized soil excavation, and equally partaking in cleaning sources of water in their environment.

**Research Question 2:** What are the planning strategies for enhancing rural women's knowledge for environmental education?

**Table 5: Mean Ratings ( $\bar{x}$ ) and Standard Deviation (SD) on Planning Strategies for Enhancing Rural Women's Knowledge for Environmental Education (EE)**

S/No.	Planning Strategies for Enhancing Rural Women's Knowledge	( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Interpretation
5	Organizing evening classes to improve EE knowledge	1.92	1.15	Disagree
6	Maintaining campaigns to acquaint rural women with environmental matters	3.05	1.05	Agree
7	Using rural women in setting goal and objectives on environmental matters	3.09	1.11	Agree
8	Conduct literacy programs	2.91	1.01	Agree
9	Providing learning centers	2.97	1.14	Agree
10	Awarding prizes of EE	2.22	1.15	Disagree

The analysis on Table 5 shows the responses of rural women on planning strategies for enhancing their knowledge on environmental education. Table 5 also indicates that items 6, 7, 8, and 9 have their mean rating ranging from 2.97 to 3.09, while item numbers 5 and 10 have their mean ratings as 1.92 and 2.22, respectively. In sum, Table 5 shows that the rural women were in agreement that some strategies for enhancing their knowledge on environmental education is required but they did not like the idea of evening classes and prize awards for the effective administration of environmental education.

**Research Question 3:** What are the Administrative Strategies for effective administration of environmental education?

*Strategies for Effective Administration of Environmental Education for Rural Women in Enugu State of Nigeria***Table 6: Mean Ratings ( $\bar{x}$ ) and Standard Deviation (SD) of Rural Women on Administrative Strategies for effective administration of environmental education**

S/No.	Administrative Strategies for Effective Administration of EE	( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Interpretation
11	Establishing educational institution for training/implementation of planned strategies for enhancing rural women's knowledge	2.97	1.14	Agree
12	Sourcing of funds for payment of health workers	2.99	1.13	Agree
13	Conducting seminars/workshops on personnel administrators	3.02	1.18	Agree
14	Using supervisory control to check rural women activities	3.07	1.16	Agree
15	Organizing public relation campaign for sanitation and environmental matters	3.07	1.19	Agree

Table 6 shows that rural women responded positively to all the items on administrative strategies for effective administration of environmental education. The mean rating ranges from 2.97 to 3.07 on all the items.

**Summary of the Major Findings**

1. The rural women in Enugu State require a wide range of environmental education knowledge and skills.
2. The attitudes and level of participation of the rural women in Enugu State towards Environmental Education is high.

**Discussion of the Findings**

The findings from research question one show that the rural women in Enugu State participate actively in environmental education. This is evident from the high mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) ratings on all the



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four identified areas of participation. This high level of participation is as a result of the realization that a healthy environment is a wealthy environment. The rural women are conscious of the fact that life-sustaining resources are obtained from the environment, and its destruction means the depletion of such resources. Consequently, they will not seatback and watch the environment deteriorate. In line with this, Obi (1993), affirmed that rural women in Nigeria, like their counterparts in other nations, are the hardest hit by environmental deterioration due to their close connection with nature.

This study's findings from question two reveal that the planning strategies required to enhance rural women's knowledge for environmental education (EE) are centered on mass literacy and public enlightenment. This is because such strategies bring information to their doorsteps. Moreover, such information will increase their knowledge base and make them susceptible to EE. When the rural women are properly informed or educated, they will gradually begin to develop positive attitudes towards the environment. This is consistent with the recommendation offered by Obi (1993), that education should be seen as the key to an effective environmental management in Nigeria. Obi further contended that without education the rural women will be resistant to innovations, as was the case with grassroots women development organization, which initially resisted new farming techniques introduced by Imo State Agricultural Development Authority, until they were educated on the possible benefits associated with the new techniques.

The result from research question three reveal that many strategies have been put in place to improve effective administration of environmental education in Enugu State. Some of these strategies include:

- Availability of educational institutions for training/implementation of planned strategies for enhancing rural women's knowledge;
- Provision of sufficient funds for payment of health workers;
- Conducting seminars/workshops on personnel administrators; and
- Family visitation by health workers and sanitation agents on regular basis on environmental matters.

These strategies are aimed at inculcating an environmental sub-culture in the minds of the rural women. When this is fully developed, the administration of environmental education will become more effective. However, the National Conference on environmental education (EE) in Nigeria organized by the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) observed that the level of environmental awareness in Nigerian learning institutions is very low. This does not mean that EE has not been introduced in these institutions, but the rate at which it is being popularized is

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very low. Additionally, the incorporation of environmental education (EE) into established departments and related courses makes it obscured. This infusion of a multidisciplinary approach has gained much credence in our institutions because it does not involve extra expenditure of material and human resources.

On the other hand, the approach recommended by Anyakoha and Igboeli (1993) that specialized government agencies like Federal Environmental Protection Agency and some non-governmental organizations like the Nigerian Conservation Foundation have done much towards the development and popularization of EE. The Federal Ministry of Education through the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council has mapped an action plan for the promotion of EE for children during their formative and adolescent years. It is hoped that this plan, as a matter of public policy, will inculcate a subculture of concern and care for the environment among children. When this is achieved the future becomes guaranteed.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. All levels of governments, both national and local, should provide opportunities for women, including the rural women, to participate in environmental decision-making as managers, designers and planners, and as implementers and evaluators of environmental projects.
2. The government should facilitate and increase rural women's access to information and education, including in areas of economics thus enhancing their knowledge, skills and opportunities for participation in environmental decisions.
3. The rural women should be taught how to take appropriate measures to reduce their risks from identified environmental hazards at home, at work and in other environments including appropriate application to clean their environment as well.
4. Women should be taught how to take measures in empowering themselves as producers and consumers so that they can take effective environmental actions along with men in their homes, communities, and in their workplaces.
5. Establish strategies and mechanisms to increase the proportion of women, particularly rural women at grassroots level, involved in development and implementation of policies and programs for natural resources management, and environmental protection and conservation.

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