

# Is literacy key to community development? Analyzing two groups of adults' involvement in development projects in Northern Nigeria

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## **Abstract**

*This paper investigates the influence of adult literacy on grassroots people's involvement in community development (CD) projects in Nigeria. It examines the differences in the level of involvement in CD projects by participants and non-participants in adult literacy programmes. Using multi-stage sampling, 408 respondents were interviewed to obtain information. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to summarize the data. Statistical analysis explains the variations in the mean values of the socio-economic variables and involvement in CD activities of the respondents who participated and those who never participated in adult literacy classes. Comparing participants' income and political status before and after participation in literacy programmes, the analysis shows that at  $P \leq 0.01$  level of significance, there was a significant difference in their income ( $F = 11.26$ ) and political status ( $F = 78.40$ ). The paper suggests that participatory and learner-oriented literacy initiatives are necessary for a sustainable and functional adult literacy programme.*

**Keywords:** adult literacy, community development, participation, learner-oriented literacy.

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## **Introduction**

There is a strong link between development and education. Indeed, education, formal and non-formal, is the bedrock of a 'transformative approach' to community development (see for instance, Kane, 2006; Fraser, 2005). Education can enhance the potential for people at the grassroots level to experience social change (Kane, 2006). It engenders the acquisition of educational experiences which go beyond academic or professional qualifications, and it helps the individual to find his or her purpose in the community (Hunt, 2009; see also Fauré, 1972). Just like in other developing countries, a large proportion of the Nigerian population resides in the rural areas, where most people are largely illiterate and depend on farming for their livelihoods. Even in the south-western region, where people are relatively more educated, the villagers are not in any way better-off than their counterparts in other educationally disadvantaged areas of the country. Yet, this rural population constitutes the bulk (over 75%) of the people in agricultural employment, who are responsible for the production of food and raw materials (see Omolewa et al, 1998: 13). These farmers also produce cash crops to earn foreign currency. Low levels of literacy, however, impede farmers' ability to develop skills that would make their businesses competitive. The non-literate adult farmers and nomads (as well as other community members), therefore, need special education to enable them to realize their full potential (see Oduaran, 1994; Bown 1979: 13-28). In the United States, for instance, publicly-funded adult education programmes are targeted at helping adults increase their reading skills so that their educational, vocational, and personal goals are more attainable (Bell, Ziegler, and McCallum, 2004).

Brandt, cited in Kazemek (2004), views literacy as a combination of individual and economic development. Education is seen as an instrument for mobilizing social and economic change. This philosophy guided Nigerian policymakers before the attainment of independence (UNESCO, 1976). In 1995, the old western region launched its landmark programme of universal free education. Whether this programme has fulfilled its objectives and satisfied its intended beneficiaries is the subject of another debate.

Northern Nigeria has always lagged behind the Southern region in terms of education (Jega, 2003). To bridge this education gap between the north and south, a number of education policies were formulated. The objective of this article is to examine the extent to which non-formal

education in northern Nigeria reflects these historical disparities by examining the impact of adult literacy (AL) programmes on sustainable development.

A number of definitions of community have been proffered (see Shaw, 2007). For example, some scholars define community as a collective informed by emotional solidarity, which is out of tune with the 'individualistic', fast-paced, detached, post-modern and the profit-maximizing world (Ellis, 1998; Fraser, 2005). Fraser (2005) defines a community as a body of relatively stable, harmonious, homogenous and connected collectivities. Elsewhere, 'community' is construed as a transient collectivity which exhibits solidarity in sharing common goods and making decisions bordering on socio-ecological challenges within certain contexts (see again Fraser, 2005; Bishop, 2002; Ife, 2002; Pettus, 1997). 'Community' is also perceived as a container for the 'ordinary folk' to converge, seek refuge and show solidarity and deliberate on common social injustices and environmental problems (Fraser 2005; Bishop, 2002). Community development (CD), then, is one of the major strategies for driving development at the grassroots level (Jibowo, 1992; Williams, 1978). Thus, the major principles of CD as outlined by Anyanwu (1992) are those of self-help, felt-need, citizen participation, self-growth and self-reliance. Shepherd (1998) opines that CD and self-help efforts rely heavily on idealism and altruism among participants if they (participants) are to effectively manage common resources or provide common services. The aim of any AL programme, therefore, is to realize all the major principles of CD.

### **The problem and research question**

The transformative role of education as a facilitator of rapid national development has made successive Nigerian Governments to make it top priority in different development programmes. The design of frameworks such as the Ten-Year Education Development Plan (1946-1955), the Education Ordinance of 1948, and the National Policy on Education of 1981, are an indication of this. These programmes share a common philosophy, namely, the recognition of education as the 'instrument *par excellence*' of the socio-economic, political and technological advancement of the country and the empowerment of the individual. It was, therefore, the belief of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO) (1976) that Nigeria was bound to the commitment to reach the *Education for All* target by the year 2000. This may have informed the provision, in sub-section 3 of section 18 of the 1999

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, that the '[g]overnment shall strive to eradicate illiteracy, and to this end, Government shall, as when practicable provide free, compulsory and Universal Primary Education; Secondary Education; University Education; and *Adult Literacy Programmes*' (added emphasis).

Guided by the Bretton Woods, the neoliberal policies of the Nigerian Government (implemented from the mid-1980s to-date) have continued to hamper the government's efforts to fund formal education (see Monbiot, 2000). This has also adversely affected the implementation of AL programmes in the country. In spite of the fact that it was expressly stated that funding informal, out-of-school education programmes should be the responsibility of the national government, the Nigerian government has, over the years, shirked its responsibility of coming up with effective adult literacy programmes. The moribund *Ife* Varsity based *Isoya* Rural Development Project in south western Nigeria (which had the implementation of adult literacy programmes as one of its main objectives) serves as an example of this laxity (Kolawole, 2009a). Having said that, a series of AL programmes have been executed in northern Nigeria. Having designated Nigeria as one of the four 'focus' countries in the world where access to education and technology would be provided, among others, the United States government in 1999, through its mission in Nigeria, initiated the creation of Community Resource Centres (CRCs) in all the six geo-political zones of the country (under the Education for Development and Democracy Initiative, EDDI). Part of the mandate of the CRCs was to serve as focal points for community-sponsored activities in such vital areas as HIV/AIDS education and adult literacy programmes (United States Diplomatic Mission to Nigeria, 2003). By June 2003, three of the six CRCs had been set up in Abuja (North-central), Bauchi (North-east), and Kaduna (North-west) (The United States Mission, 2003). Again, whether or not this interventionist effort, in addition to others, has achieved its objectives is an area that requires to be assessed in another study. This particular study focuses on whether AL programmes have enhanced the socio-economic and political empowerment of the rural dwellers in northern Nigeria, whether there is any relationship between participation in AL programmes and involvement in community level self-help projects, and whether there is any difference between those who participated in AL programmes *vis a vis* their involvement in community-level, self-help projects and those who never participated in the programmes in northern Nigeria.

The following three research questions formed the basis for this investigation: (i) What are the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of rural community dwellers (both participants and non-participants in AL) in the study area? (ii) What are the various AL activities and their roles/influence in and on individuals' community-level involvement in self-help development projects? (iii) Is there a difference in the levels of involvement in community development projects between those who participated in AL programmes/classes and those who did not?

### ***Hypotheses of the study***

The hypotheses of the study were stated in the null ( $H_0$ ) form viz:

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference between the socio-economic characteristics and levels of involvement in community-level development projects of participants and non-participants in AL activities; and

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant difference in the income and political statuses of participants in adult literacy activities before and after the AL programme.

### **Methodology**

#### ***The study area/population studied***

Northern Nigeria, which is the study area, comprises three geo-political zones (North-west, North-east and North-central). The three zones comprise a total of twenty (20) states including the Federal Capital Territory. The study populations were mainly the Hausa, Fulani, Ibara, Birom, Idoma, Igala, Tiv and Kanuri ethnic groupings, all inhabiting the central and far north of Nigeria. They are primarily agrarian, and live mainly in the countryside. The Fulani are, however, itinerant nomads, with cattle rearing as their major economic activity. The majority of these people are Moslem, non-literate, and are believed to have large families.

#### ***Sample methods- procedures and description***

The selection of the study area was purposive and complemented a previous study conducted in south-western part of Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 408 adult respondents (both male and female) in the three (3) zones. A balloting technique was employed to carry out a random sampling of the states in each of the

three zones. Consequently, altogether six states were chosen namely: Borno, Yobe, Kano, Kaduna, Benue, and Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Twenty-five (25.0) percent of the rural Local Government Areas (LGAs) in each selected state were chosen for the study. From each selected rural LGA, 25.0 per cent of the communities were randomly sampled. In all, a proportionate number of rural communities (in relation to the total number of communities in all selected LGAs) were sampled. In each selected community, the snowball technique was used to sample two groups of respondents (where the population size of each of the two groups was determined), based on the total population of each community as provided by the National Population Commission (NPC) and participation or non-participation in AL programmes. The first group consisted of respondents who had participated in AL programmes, and the second group consisted of those who had not participated in the programmes. The second group served as a control group. Bamberger, Rugh, Church, and Fort (2004) posit that one basic principle of an impact evaluation design experiment is the selection of a control group. As such, both the experimental and control groups were interviewed. Nonetheless, only 408 respondents (200 non-participants and 208 participants) consented to participate in the research.

### ***Research instrumentation and procedures for data collection***

Data were collected from the adult respondents using interview schedules consisting of structured and unstructured questions. Two categories of variables (independent variables and a dependent variable) were addressed in the design of the instruments. Independent variables ( $X_s$ ) included socio-economic and cultural factors and adult literacy activities, which interplay in influencing respondents' level of involvement in CD projects ( $Y$ ). Among other variables, age was measured by assigning points to respondents based on their ages. Family size was measured by the total number of individuals living within a household. Income was measured by the amount of money which respondents earned per month. Respondents' level of involvement in CD activities/projects was measured by placing a set of related statements on a 4-point *Likert* rating scale of 'no involvement' (scored 0 point); 'little involvement' (1 point); 'moderate involvement' (2 points); and 'high involvement' (3 points). The total maximum score was 18 points.

### ***Implications and limitations***

The findings presented in this paper can be generalized within similar socio-cultural contexts and conditions. However, the absence of data on income and political status of non-participants after the implementation of AL classes in the study area imposes limitations on the inferences that can be made in comparing these two categories of respondents in a situation where the two indices (income and political status) are exclusively considered.

### ***Analysis of data***

Data were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics (such as frequency, percentages, means, standard deviations and graphs). Inferential statistics (analysis of variance, ANOVA) was used to determine the difference in the means of the two groups of respondents.

## **Discussion**

### ***Demographic, socio-economic and cultural attributes***

Table 1a shows that 79.8 per cent of those who participated in adult literacy (AL) classes were males while 20.2 per cent were females. The low population of women participants may have been influenced by socio-cultural factors (see for instance, Daniels, 2010). Non-participant respondents account for 82.5 per cent male and 17.5 per cent female (see Figure 1). Most participant (79.3%) and non-participant (70%) respondents were married. While 16.5 per cent of the participants were single, about 19.5 per cent of non-participants were single. Only a few of the respondents belonging to both categories were divorced, separated, or widowed. The average age of participants was 35.6 years with a standard deviation of 9.35. The average age of non-participants was 36.1 with a standard deviation of 8.95. Participants who were within the age bracket of 50 years and above constituted only 3.4 per cent. This shows that most adult class participants were relatively young (see Figure 2). While the average family size of participants was 2.59 with a standard deviation of 1.18, non-participants' families averaged 2.38 persons, with a standard deviation of 1.12. Only 19.7 and 11.5 per cent of participants and non-participants respectively had a family size of 7 persons and above. In the context of this study (at least), the data contradict and challenge an earlier assumption that northern Nigerians have more children than their counterparts in the Southern and eastern regions. Most participants and non-participants had never gone higher than secondary education.

**Table 1a: Socio-economic attributes of participants/ non-participants in adult literacy programme**

Variable		Participant <sup>1</sup>		Non-participant <sup>2</sup>	
Sex		N	%	N	%
(i)	Male	166	79.8	165	82.5
(ii)	Female	42	20.2	35	17.5
Marital status					
(i)	Married	165	79.3	140	70.0
(ii)	Single	34	16.5	39	19.5
(iii)	Divorced	3	1.4	6	3.0
(iv)	Separated	3	1.4	8	4.0
(v)	Widow	1	0.5	2	1.0
(vi)	Widower	2	1.0	5	2.5
Age					
(i)	<15.0 years	1	0.5	1	0.5
(i)	16 – 25	29	13.9	22	11.0
(ii)	26 – 35	81	38.9	76	38.0
(iii)	36 – 45	71	34.1	78	39.0
(iv)	46 – 55	19	9.1	19	9.5
(v)	56 – 65	6	2.9	3	1.5
(vi)	>74	1	0.5	1	0.5
Participants' Mean = 35.6; SD = 9.350 Non-participants' mean = 36.1; SD = 8.950					
Family size					
(i)	<2 members	36	17.3	48	24.0
(ii)	3-4 members	81	38.9	77	38.5
(iii)	5-6 members	50	24.0	52	26.0
(iv)	7-8 members	25	12.0	18	9.0
(v)	10 and above	16	7.7	5	2.5
Participants' Mean = 2.59; SD = 1.180 Non-participants' mean = 2.38; SD = 1.118					
Education level					
(i)	Standard education	15	7.2	3	1.5
(ii)	Primary education	80	38.5	45	22.5
(iii)	Modern school	16	7.7	14	7.0
(iv)	Secondary school	25	16.8	29	14.5
(v)	Quoranic school	62	29.9	109	54.5
Occupation					
(i)	Farming	59	28.4	72	36.0
(ii)	Trading	40	19.2	55	27.5
(iii)	Artisan job	20	9.6	17	8.5
(iv)	Civil service job	69	33.2	28	14.0
(v)	Cottage entrepreneurship	6	2.9	9	4.5



(vi)	Driving	9	4.3	12	6.0
(vii)	Fishing	5	2.4	7	3.5

**Source:** Field survey, 2008

1. Participants sample size = 208
2. Non-participants sample size = 200
3. Na = Not applicable

Only 16.8 and 14.5 per cent of participants and non-participants respectively had attained secondary school education. While 29.9 per cent of the participants attended Quoranic school, 54.5 per cent of non-participants attended the same. The foregoing buttresses the assertion that not many people in northern Nigeria receive formal higher education. The majority of participants and non-participants were involved in civil service jobs, farming and trading.

The data in Table 1b also show that the initial average income [in Nigerian Naira<sup>1</sup>, NGN] of participants was NGN 9,162.52 while that of non-participants was NGN 11,550.50. Comparing their initial income with earnings after adult literacy classes, the data reveal that participants' income had substantially increased at the end of the programme as their new income averaged NGN 12,124.88. This constitutes a difference of about NGN 3000.00. Although still relatively low, the income differential shows a significant improvement in the earnings of those that participated in AL classes<sup>2</sup>. It is thus inferred that people's participation in educational programmes (whether formal or non-formal) may positively affect their socio-economic well-being. Most participants and non-participants' socio-cultural affiliations were mainly in age grades and in village councils. Perhaps due to their religious beliefs, not many people in either categories of participants (2.9%) and non-participants (6.5%) belonged to traditional confraternity. Comparing their political status before and after participation in adult classes, the respondents in the participating category changed status from not belonging to any political organization(s) (21.1%) to being members (51.4%). Those who were committee members increased from 16.8 per cent to 35.1 per cent. There was also an upward mobility in terms of the number of officers increasing from 2.9 per cent to 7.7 per cent. Also, both participants (68.3%) and non-participants (76.0%) were practising Moslems. Only a small percentage of participants (21.6%) and non-participants (19.5%) respectively were Christians.

**Table 1b: Socio-economic attributes of both participants and non-participants in adult literacy programme**

Variable		Participant <sup>1</sup>		Non-participant <sup>2</sup>	
Income in Naira/month [before participation]		N	%	N	%
(iii)	<7500.00	87	41.8	51	25.5
(iv)	7501-15000	91	43.8	102	51.0
(v)	15001-22500	18	8.7	38	19.0
(vi)	22501-30000	6	2.9	6	3.0
(vii)	>30000	6	2.9	3	1.5

Participants' Mean = 9,162.52; SD = 2,216.80; Non-participants' mean = 11,550.50; SD = 2,026.94

Variable		Participant <sup>1</sup>		Non-participant <sup>2</sup>	
Income in Naira/month [after participation]		N	%	N	%
(i)	<7500.00	54	26.0	Na <sup>3</sup>	Na
(ii)	7501-15000	102	49.0	Na	Na
(iii)	15001-22500	29	13.9	Na	Na
(iv)	22501-30000	16	7.7	Na	Na
(v)	>30000	7	3.3	Na	Na

Participants' mean = 12,124.88; SD = 253.96

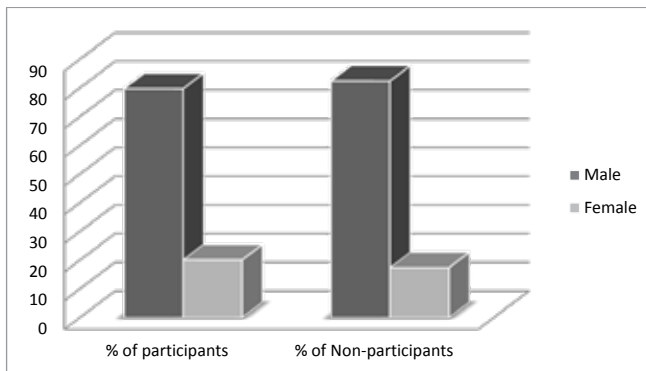
Variable		Participant <sup>1</sup>		Non-participant <sup>2</sup>	
Socio-cultural affiliation		N	%	N	%
(i)	Village council	43	20.7	38	19.0
(ii)	Age grade	96	46.2	96	48.0
(iii)	Traditional confraternity	6	2.9	13	6.5
(iv)	Others	54	26.0	49	24.5
(v)	No affiliation	9	4.3	4	2.0
Variable		Participant <sup>1</sup>		Non-participant <sup>2</sup>	
Political status [before participation]		N	%	N	%
(i)	Not applicable	44	21.1	43	21.5
(ii)	Ordinary member	123	59.1	124	62.0
(iii)	Comm. member	35	16.8	26	13.0
(iv)	Officer	6	2.9	7	3.5
Variable		Participant <sup>1</sup>		Non-participant <sup>2</sup>	
Political status [after participation]		N	%	N	%
(i)	Not applicable	12	5.8	Na	Na
(ii)	Ordinary member	107	51.4	Na	Na
(iii)	Ordinary member	73	35.1	Na	Na
(iv)	Officer	16	7.7	Na	Na

Variable	Religion	Participant <sup>1</sup>		Non-participant <sup>2</sup>	
		N	%	N	%
(i)	Islam	142	68.3	152	76.0
(ii)	Christianity	45	21.6	39	19.5
(iii)	Traditional religion	3	1.4	5	2.5
(iv)	Trado-Christlam	1	0.5	2	1.0
(v)	None	17	8.2	2	1.0

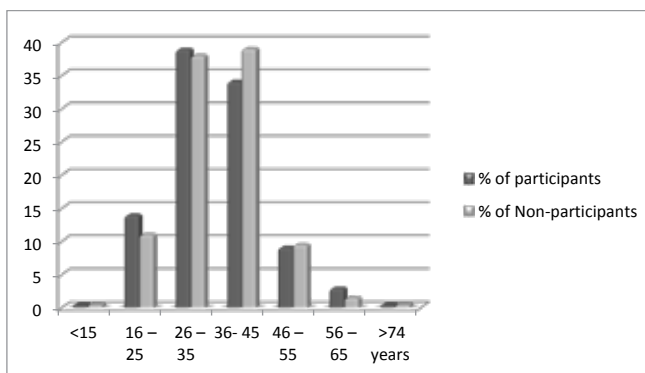
Source: Field survey, 2008

1. Participants' sample size = 208
2. Non-participants, sample size = 200
3. Na = Not applicable

**Figure 1: Percentage distribution of participants and non-participants' gender**



**Figure 2: Percentage age distribution of participants and non-participants of adult literacy class**



### ***Level of involvement of both participants and non-participants in CD projects***

The various CD projects considered for this study include building of feeder roads, community viewing centre, town hall, mosques, etc. in which respondents had varying degrees of involvement. Table 2 indicates that relatively few participants (23.5%) and non-participants (26.5%) respectively were financially involved in CD activities. While 23.1 non-participants and 16.8 per cent of participants had moderate and high involvement, respectively, in providing moral support for CD projects, non-participants also had moderate (25%) and high involvement (11.5%) in the same. Whereas, those who provided physical support amongst participants had moderate (37.0%) and high involvement (15.4%), about 29.5 % of participants and 15 % of non-participants respectively also had moderate and high involvement in providing physical support. In terms of contributing in kind to CD projects, only 23.1 and 10.1 per cent of participants had moderate and high involvement respectively. Non-participants were moderately (25%) to highly (3%) involved in providing material resources for CD project implementation as well. While those who were moderately and highly involved in decision-making in initiating CD projects accounted for 21.6 and 9.6 per cent of participants, respectively, about 18.5 and 8.0 per cent of non-participants were also moderately and highly involved, respectively. Participants who engaged in mobilizing external funding for CD projects reported a higher percentage of high involvement (14.4%) while non-participants reported a lower percentage of high involvement (8.5%) in external fund mobilization. The analysis shows that for both participants, there was little or no motivation to be involved in CD projects. Thus, the AL activities may have had little or no significant impact in the participants' involvement in community development projects. Asked why people had low motivation for participating in CD activities, most respondents said that the government (which holds tax-payers' money in trust), not poor people, was responsible for implementing development projects.

**Table 2: Level of involvement of both participants and non-participants in CD projects**

Nature of involvement*	No involvement		Little involvement		Moderate involvement		High involvement	
	P <sup>1</sup>	NP <sup>2</sup>	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP
(i) I do contribute financially to CD projects in my community	74 (35.5) <sup>+</sup>	79 (39.5)	85 (40.9) (34.0)	68	34 (16.3)	32 (16.0)	15 (7.2)	21 (10.5)
(ii) I support CD projects morally by encouraging others to participate and ensuring security	31 (14.9)	127 (63.5)	94 (45.2)	81 (40.5)	48 (23.1)	50 (25.0)	35 (16.8)	23 (11.5)
(iii) I give physical support to CD projects as manual labour on project sites	59 (28.3)	50 (25.0)	40 (19.2)	61 (30.5)	77 (37.0)	59 (29.5)	32 (15.4)	30 (15.0)
(iv) I give support to CD projects by contributing in kind (giving of some needed materials)	52 (25.0)	66 (33.0)	87 (41.8)	78 (39.0)	48 (23.1)	50 (25.0)	21 (10.1)	6 (3.0)
(v) I am a part of the decision-making body which initiate ideas on CD projects in my community	96 (46.1)	89 (89.0)	47 (22.6)	58 (29.0)	45 (21.6)	37 (18.5)	20 (9.6)	16 (8.0)
(vi) I help in some or most cases to mobilize external funds for CD projects in my community	113 (54.3)	112 (56)	42 (20.2)	36 (18.0)	23 (11.1)	35 (17.5)	30 (14.4)	17 (8.5)

Source: Field survey, 2008

1. P= Participants; Sample size = 208
2. N= Non-participants; Sample size = 200
- \* Multiple responses
- + Percentages are in parenthesis (...)

### ***Problems associated with adult literacy class implementation in northern Nigeria***

Respondents who participated in the adult class identified some problems associated with the implementation of AL projects. While 42.8 per cent of them indicated that there was a dearth of reading and writing materials, 64.9 per cent said the time covered by the project was too short. Unavailability of qualified teachers (63.9 %), low turnout of participants resulting from socio-cultural and personal demands (55.8%), teachers' apathy as a result of poor incentives (45.2%), and inappropriate curriculum, which is not in line with the needs of learners (82.7%), were some of the major problems the participants attributed to poor implementation of AL programmes. It can therefore be inferred from the data that a curriculum that is not aligned with the needs of the learners is a major impediment to the implementation of AL programmes.

### **Analysis of variance of socio-economic variables of participants and non-participants in adult literacy class and their level of involvement in CD projects**

The statistical analysis in Table 3 explains the variations in the mean values of the socio-economic variables and involvement in CD activities of the respondents who participated and those who never participated in adult literacy classes. At  $P \leq 0.01$  level of significance, there was no significant difference in the family size ( $F=3.45$ ) of both categories of respondents in the study. More importantly, at  $P \leq 0.01$  level of significance, education level ( $F=30.94$ ), political status ( $F=238.21$ ), income before adult literacy class ( $F=6.79$ ), and income after adult literacy class ( $F=705.89$ ) were significantly different between the two groups of adults investigated. Nonetheless, both age ( $F=0.31$ ) and level of involvement in CD projects ( $F=1.46$ ) were not significantly different. This finding negates the earlier findings in south-western Nigeria where grassroots people's participation in AL classes positively affected their involvement in CD activities (Kolawole, 2009a). This could be explained by the assumption that people's preferences vary in different socio-cultural contexts. Inferentially, the high values of 'F' in income and political status of those who participated in adult class and those who did not may have reflected the important role of literacy in the enhancement of socio-economic and political statuses of people. Also, the data in Table 2 show the non-significant difference in the involvement of both groups of adults in CD projects (as most respondents in both categories were either not involved or less involved

in CD projects in their communities). To the extent that the acquisition of a measure of literacy skills by individuals may have improved their political and income statuses, the same may not necessarily apply to their involvement in community development projects, at least in the socio-cultural context where this study was conducted (cf. Kolawole, 2009a). This is a policy issue in national orientation and awareness creation that requires attention amongst grassroots people in northern Nigeria and other similar regions. Data were disaggregated and subjected to further analysis in Table 4 to determine whether the difference in income and political status of the participant group was as a result of their participation in AL classes. Comparing their income and political statuses before and after participation in literacy programmes, analysis revealed that at  $P \leq 0.01$  level of significance, there was a significant difference in participants' income ( $F=11.26$ ) and political status ( $F=78.40$ ). This finding further buttresses the earlier claim that participation in adult literacy class may impact positively on respondents' socio-economic and political uplifting.

**Table 3: Analysis of variance showing the differences in the mean values of socio-economic variables of participants and non-participants in adult literacy class and their level of involvement in CD projects**

Variable	Sum of squares (Between groups)	Mean square	F value	Decision
(i) Age	52.44	26.22	0.31	Not significant
(ii) Family size	9.12	4.56	3.45	Not Significant
(iii) Education level	113.00	56.50	30.94**	Significant
(iv) Political status	460.24	230.12	238.21**	Significant
(v) Income before adult class	10.56	5.28	6.79**	Significant
(vi) Income after adult class	903.08	451.54	705.89**	Significant
(vii) Level of involvement in community development projects	47.86	23.93	1.46	Not significant

Source: Field survey, 2008

\*\*F value significant at  $P \leq 0.01$

**Table 4: Analysis of variance showing the difference in the incomes and political status of participants before and after participation in adult class**

Variable	Sum of squares (Within groups)	Mean square	F value	Decision
(i) Income of participants after participation	22.24	11.12	11.26**	Significant
(ii) Political status after participation	134.08	67.04	78.40**	Significant

Source: Field survey, 2008

\*\*F value significant at  $P \leq 0.01$

## Conclusions

The purpose of this research paper was to examine the effects of AL programmes on the enhancement of grassroots people's socio-economic and political empowerment in northern Nigeria. It sought to establish the relationship between participation in AL programmes and involvement in community level self-help projects. The differences between those who participated in AL programmes *vis a vis* their involvement in community-level self-help projects and those who never participated in the programmes were also identified.

Male respondents who participated in adult literacy classes constituted 79.8 per cent of the population. Only 20.2 per cent of the participants were female. Non-participants respondents in the study were for 82.5 per cent male and 17.5 per cent female. There was no significant difference in the level of involvement in community development projects by participants and non-participants in AL programmes, and this finding is at variance with the findings obtained in south-western region of Nigeria. As earlier observed in the paper, respondents appeared to be less motivated in getting involved in CD work regardless of whether or not they were illiterate. The respondents' views were that the implementation of public projects should be the responsibility of the government. This has implication for development policy issues. Indeed, there cannot be a mutually exclusive strategy for enhancing people's development. In order to surmount development



challenges, there is need to employ an eclectic approach to implementing development agendas and strategies (Kolawole, 2009b). The income and political statuses of those who participated in the AL programmes had significantly changed after participation, while income and political status of the group that did not participate in the AL programmes remained static. This shows that participation in AL classes may have had a positive impact on participants' socio-economic characteristics and political dispositions. This is also an important policy issue, which needs strengthening in poverty reduction strategies of the Nigerian government and other relevant international bodies.

Most learners attributed the challenges of AL programme implementation to an irrelevant curriculum. This is another policy issue, which requires development practitioners to address it. The government and other stakeholders [both national and international] need to come up with an adequate blue-print that takes care of the aspirations of the would-be AL participants in future literacy programmes. There is need for relevant national agencies and government departments to embark on literacy advocacy and awareness campaigns amongst the people and emphasize the importance of participating in AL. In order to make future initiatives on AL sustainable, there is need to ensure that literacy programmes are fully participatory and functional in design and scope.

### Notes

1. NGN158:00 exchanges for about US\$1.00 at the time of writing this paper.
2. Please note that it is one of the assumptions of this study that people's participation in education programmes will impact positively on their earning power, all things being equal.

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