



THE ROLES OF COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION OF FARMERS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the roles of community based organizations (CBOs) in livelihood diversification of farmers in Rivers State. A multi-stage sampling technique was used for the selection of sampled respondents. Structured questionnaire was administered to generate data from the respondents. A total of 120 respondents were used for the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Also, a sample of 60 farmers who were involved in CBOs and 60 farmers who were not, were randomly selected from three (3) agricultural zones. Primary data was utilised in this study. The study revealed that majority of the respondents (75%) fell between the age ranges of 31-40 years, 45% were illiterate, 66% had farming experience from 10-15 years. The result of this study further identified some roles played by community based organization in livelihood diversification of farmers. These include provision of credit facilities, awareness campaign, provision of basic amenities, and organization of farmers' cooperatives, capacity building and opening of ways for farmers' involvement in grassroots development. The mean output and mean income of farmers who were members of CBO were greater than the mean output and mean income of those who were not members. The major constraint to farmers' involvement in CBOs' programmes was inability of CBO to identify farmers' felt needs (100%) which was ranked first, followed by high membership dues (86%) and age discrimination (72%) which were further ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively. Other constraints were inadequacy of credits given (55%), high level of illiteracy (46%). These were ranked 4th and 5th respectively. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that, the community based organizations in the study area benefited farmers by diversifying farmers' livelihood on output and income. Therefore, this study recommended that the organized farmers' cooperative societies by CBOs should assist themselves financially. Farmers should make a list of their felt needs known to CBOs.

Keywords: Roles, CBOs, farmers' livelihood, multi-stage, primary data.

INTRODUCTION

Community based organization can be defined as an organization through which individuals become more competent in their skills, attitudes and concept in order to gain control over local aspects of their communities through democratic participation. Community based organizations seek to broadly empower community members with the goal of distributing resources equally throughout the community (Warts, 2008). Based on this perspective, it could mean that community based organization's primary goal is to meet the unique needs of the community it serves as a whole and individuals in particular. In addition, community based organization generates and utilises available resources and skills, as well as those untapped skills to meet the varied needs of the community and those of its residents (Akanya, 2008). Community based organizations are set up by a collective efforts of indigenous people of heterogeneous attributes that are living within the same environment to create conditions which broaden the base of self-reliance and diffusion of agricultural information, ideas or technologies. The concept of community development is not new in Nigeria. Before achieving independence from colonial powers, some communities in the country had developed indigenous approaches in organizing development activities at local levels to diversify rural livelihood and reduce poverty (Adefila, 2011).

idea of livelihood diversification refers to the collection of activities carried out to assist individuals and households to meet their basic needs. According to Igonoh (2011), diversification has become imperative for poverty alleviation and ensuring food security because of shortage of food due to adverse climatic conditions. Rural livelihood diversification in the context of this study can therefore be defined as the process by which households construct a diverse portfolio of social support activities for the survival from both increase in their output and income to improve their standard of living and poverty reduction (Harper and Dunham, 2005). The agricultural extension institutions and organizations; operations and practices; and systems approaches are entwined with complex interrelations within and without the context of extension activities. The demonstration and confirmation of these complex interrelationships is established by Adedoyin (2002) when he defined extension as "a comprehensive programme of services deliberately put in place for expanding, strengthening and empowering the capacity of the present and future farmers, farm families and other rural economic operators (such as processors, marketers, farm labour force and communities as well as providing essential entrepreneurial and managerial skills that they need to succeed in farming and farm related activities occupations. It is clear from the above that the top-down approaches to extension works and other rural

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development programmes have no place in the farmer-centred extension strategy in Nigeria. The extension strategy which is capable of developing agriculture through the farmers themselves with their own resources and assistance of other stakeholders in extension are Community Based Organizations (CBOs) among others. This paper therefore, examines the roles of CBOs by addressing the following objectives.

The broad objective was to assess the roles of Community Based Organizations in livelihood diversification of farmers in Rivers State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- i. describe the socio-economic characteristics of CBO farmers and non-CBO farmers in the study area
- ii. identify the roles of Community Based Organizations
- iii. determine the livelihood diversification of farmers
- iv. identify the constraints to farmers' involvement in CBOs

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Rivers State. The state was formed in 1967 with the split of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. Until 1996, the State encompass the area now known as Bayelsa State. Rivers State is one of the 36 states of Nigeria. According to census data released in 2006, the state has a population of 5,185,400, making it the sixth-most populous State in the country. Rivers State is bounded in the south by the Atlantic Ocean, to the North by Imo, Abia and Anambra States, to the East by Akwa Ibom State and to the west by Bayelsa and Delta States. It is a home to many indigenous ethnic groups: Ikwere, Ibani, Opobo, Okrika and Kalabari, Etche, Ogbia, Ogoni, Engenni

and others. Major cash crops produced are Oil palm, rubber, coconut, raffia palm and jute. Other crops grown for food include vegetable, melon, pineapple, mango, pepper, banana and plantain. The fish industry is an important sector in Rivers State. Also, the State provides valuable sea foods such as crabs, oysters, shrimps and sea snails among others. Rivers State is composed of twenty (23) Local Government Areas (LGAs) divided into three (3) major agricultural zones (zone I, zone II and zone III). Based on a reconnaissance survey carried out on the study area, a multistage sampling procedure was used in this study. In the first stage, one (1) LGA each was purposively selected from each of the three agricultural zones. Those were PortHarcourt LGA from zone I, Ogbia/Egbema LGA from zone II and Emohua LGA from Zone III based on intensity of community based organizations and data given by Rivers State Agricultural Development Programme (RADP). In the second stage, two communities each were randomly selected from each of the three (3) LGAs. Hence, a total of six (6) communities were chosen for the study. Those were Oroworukwo and Ogbunuabali from PortHarcourt LGA; Akabuka and Obite from Ogbia/Egbema LGA; and Ogbakiri and Rumuji from Emohua LGA. The final stage involved random selection of CBOs at 10% from the sampling frame of the communities. The sampling frame was the list of community based organizations compiled during the reconnaissance survey (Table 1). A sample size of 120 out of 1,200 sample frame was used for the study. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive and Z-test statistics. The sample distributions are as follows;

Table 1: Distribution of sampled respondents in the study area

| ZONES | Name of LGA/Communities | Registered CBOs farmers sample frame | 10% sample size |
|-------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| I | Port Harcourt LGA | | |
| | i. Oroworukwo | 200 | 20 |
| | ii. Ogbonubali | 205 | 21 |
| II | Ogbia/Egbema LGA | | |
| | i. Akabuka | 200 | 20 |
| | ii. Obite | 205 | 21 |
| III | Emuoha LGA | | |
| | i. Abgakiri | 200 | 20 |
| | ii. Rumuji | 190 | 19 |
| | | 1200 | 120 |

To determine the livelihood diversification of farmers on the output and income of farmers, 60 CBO farmers and 60 non-members were interviewed and data analyzed using Z- test statistic. The formula for Z-test statistic is as follows;

$$Z = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{S_1^2 + S_2^2}{n_1 + n_2}}}$$

Where:

Z= calculated value



X_1 = Mean output and income of farmers with CBOs

X_2 = Mean output and income of farmers without CBOs

S^2_1 = Standard deviation of farmers with CBOs

S^2_2 = Standard deviation of farmers without CBOs

n_1 = Number of farmers who were involved in CBOs activities

n_2 = Number of farmers who did not involve in CBOs activities

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings in Table 2 below revealed that majority of the respondents (75%) fell between the age ranges of 31-40 years. The average age of the farmers was found to be 35 years. This implies that, they were generally young farmers. This means that they are matured and energetic farmers and could be active in the participation of CBOs activities. This finding is synonymous with that of Davies *et al.* (2014), who reported that majority of farmers in Southeastern Nigeria were between the ages of 35-40 years. This also agrees with the findings of Nwanko *et al.* (2009) who reported that the most active farmers' age group engaged in agricultural production was within 30- 40 years. About 45% of the farmers were illiterate and 66% had farming experience from 10-15 years. This implies that, the farmers had long time farming

experience. This may be the reason why the farmers could make strong decisions to participate in CBO activities.

The result of the farmers' household size shows that majority 50% of the farmers had household size that ranged from 6-10 persons with an average household size of 5.3 persons. The implication of large household size is that, it will increase household consumption expenditure which would compete for increase in productivity. This result is in variance to Okoruwa and Ogundele (2016), who reported that large household size did not necessarily translate to higher use of improved practices because some of the young able bodied household members may prefer other jobs than farming.

The result of the farmers' farm size shows that majority (57%) had farm size ranging from 0.1 to 1.0 hectare. This implies that the farmers had small farm sizes and will not be able to adequately participate in CBOs activities. This result agreed with Ani (1999) who reported that, it is common to observe among Nigerian farmers that they have relatively small sizes of farms. Small farm size is an impediment to agricultural mechanization because using farm machineries like tractor will be difficult. Small farm sizes might be as a result of the fact that most of the farmers got their lands through inheritance.

Table 2: Distribution of socio-economic characteristics of CBO farmers and non-CBO farmers

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage | Mean |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|------|
| Age | | | |
| 20-30 | 2 | 1.6 | |
| 31-40 | 90 | 75 | 35 |
| 41-50 | 18 | 15 | |
| 51-60 | 10 | 8.3 | |
| Farming experience | | | |
| 1-5 | 11 | 9.2 | |
| 6-10 | 30 | 25 | |
| 10-15 | 79 | 66 | 12 |
| Total | 120 | 100 | |
| Educational level | | | |
| Non-formal education | 54 | 45 | |
| Primary education | 25 | 20.8 | |
| Secondary education | 20 | 16.6 | |
| Tertiary education | 21 | 17.5 | |
| Household size | | | |
| No household | 12 | 10 | |
| 1-5 | 25 | 20.8 | |
| 6-10 | 60 | 50 | 5.3 |
| 11-15 | 23 | 19.2 | |
| Total | 120 | 100 | |
| Farm size | | | |
| 0.1 - 1.0 | 57 | 67.6 | |
| 1.1 - 2.0 | 41 | 25.6 | 1 |
| 2.1 - 3.0 | 22 | 6.1 | |
| Total | 120 | 100 | |

Field survey, 2016

The result of this study in Table 3 below further identified some roles played by community based organization in livelihood diversification of farmers. These include provision of credit facilities (95%), awareness campaign (83.3%), provision of basic amenities (74.2%), and organization of farmers' cooperatives (63.3%), capacity building (45.8%) and opening of ways for farmers' involvement in grassroots development (35%). This result implies that, the CBO roles are very relevant to the farmers' needs. This means also

that, most of the farmers had access to credit facilities which could support them in farming. Ekong (2003) asserts that credit facility is a very strong factor that is needed to develop any enterprise and its availability could determine the extent of production capacity. The finding of organization of farmers' cooperatives is in line with Agbamu, (2006), who reported that cooperative formation ensures that the members derive benefits from the groups such as they could not derive individually.

Table 3: Distribution of roles of community based organizations

| Roles of CBOs | Freq. | Percent | Rank |
|--|-------|---------|-----------------|
| Provision of credit facilities | 115 | 95.8 | 1 st |
| Awareness campaign | 100 | 83.3 | 2 nd |
| Provision of basic amenities | 89 | 74.2 | 3 rd |
| Organization of farmers' cooperatives | 76 | 63.3 | 4 th |
| Capacity building | 55 | 45.8 | 5 th |
| Opening of ways for farmers' involvement in grassroots development | 42 | 35 | 6 th |

Field survey, 2016

Table 4 revealed the Z-test result of output and income of farmers as indices for measuring the livelihood diversification of farmers. The result revealed that the mean output (1832.78) and mean income (177326.75) of farmers who were members of CBO were greater than the mean output (656.60)

and mean income (76326.19) of those who were not members. This implies that, the activities of CBOs had significant effect on the output and income of the farmers who were members but did not significantly affect the output and income of farmers who were not members.

Table 4: Result of Z-test on output and income in livelihood diversification of farmers

| Item | N | Mean | SD | SE | Z-test | sig |
|---------------------------------|----|-----------|-----------|---------|--------|-----|
| Output of farmers with CBOs | 60 | 1832.78 | 2122.92 | 267.47 | | 000 |
| Output of farmers not wit CBOs | 60 | 656.60 | 480.68 | 60.56 | 4.29 | |
| Income of farmers with CBOs | 60 | 177326.75 | 128909.21 | 16241.4 | | 000 |
| Income of farmers not with CBOs | 60 | 76326.19 | 24600.68 | 3099.39 | 6.12 | |

Field survey, 2016

*= Significant at 5% level of probability

From the result in Table 5 below, it showed that, the major constraint to farmers' involvement in CBOs' programmes was inability of CBO to identify their felt needs (100%) which was ranked 1st followed by high membership dues (86%) and age discrimination (72%) which were further ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively. Other constraints were inadequacy of credits given

(55%), high level of illiteracy (46%). These were ranked 4th and 5th respectively. This implies that, the inability of the CBOs to identify farmers' needs and high membership dues may make the farmers not to fully benefit from the CBOs. The high illiteracy may also make the opportunities available to improve farmers' livelihood strategies, enhance food security be limited.

Table 5: Distribution of constraints to farmers' involvement in CBOs

| Variables | Frequency | percentage | Rank |
|---|-----------|------------|-----------------|
| Inability of CBOs to identify farmers' felt needs | 120 | 100 | 1 st |
| High membership dues | 104 | 86 | 2 nd |
| Age discrimination in credit given | 86 | 72 | 3 rd |
| Inadequate credit given | 66 | 55 | 4 th |
| Hugh level of illiteracy | 55 | 46 | 5 th |

Field survey, 2016



CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that, the community based organizations in the study area benefited farmers in many ways such as provision of credit facilities and basic amenities and creating farmers' awareness about the availability of useful agricultural information. Others were by grouping farmers into cooperative societies and capacity building. Also, there were significant differences between the output and income of farmers who were with CBOs and those who were not. This means that, the mean output and mean income of farmers who were members of CBO were greater than the mean output and mean income of those who were not members. Despite this, the farmers still faced some problems in participating in community based organizations activities. Some of these problems include inability of CBOs to identify farmers' felt needs, high membership dues, Age discrimination in credit given and inadequacy of credit given to farmers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. This study recommended that, the organized farmers' cooperative societies by CBOs should meet regularly and extend mutual benefits to its members.
- ii. Farmers should make a list of their felt needs known to CBOs.
- iii. Adult education Centre should be established and encourage farmers to enroll in it due to their high level of illiteracy
- iv. Government and private owned credit institutions should enable farmers have access to adequate credit to meet their required needs.
- v. More farmers should be encouraged to participate in CBO activities so that their livelihood status could increase.

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