

Full Length Research Paper

Beneficiaries' perception of selected rural women empowerment projects in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Problems militating against women development in rural areas revolve round their inability to develop themselves in their chosen economic activities. This study examined the beneficiaries' perception of selected agricultural empowerment projects components targeted at women in rural communities of Ogun State, Nigeria. The projects were Cassava: Adding Values Africa (C:AVA), Justice, Development and Peace Movement (JDPM) Micro finance (MICRO) and National Programme for Food Security (NPFS), implemented by Justice Development and Peace Movement (JDPM) and Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme (OGADEP). Interview guides were used to elicit information from 139 randomly selected members of 16 purposively selected groups beneficiaries of selected women empowerment in the study area. The study revealed that the rural women predominantly had high perception about the effects of the projects on their livelihood as 58.27, 72.66, 82.01, 90.65, 61.15 and 56.83% of the women perceived that the projects had improved their product packaging, access to credit facilities, knowledge and skills, business expansion, balanced emotion and increased income respectively. The data was subjected to Chi -Square analysis and the result showed that there is a significant relationship between the nature of occupation the women engaged in and the effect of the projects ($\chi^2 = 15.38$, $p < 0.05$), while other socio-economic characteristics were not significantly related with the projects' effect. It was inferred from this study that participants of the OGADEP and JDPM projects had high perception of the effects of the projects on their livelihood. This study recommended that governmental and non-governmental organizations of rural orientation should focus more on empowering rural women and other rural household members in order to transform rural communities.

Key words: Beneficiaries, perception, empowerment, rural women

INTRODUCTION

Gender issues cannot be excluded from agricultural and rural development in Nigeria, Africa and the entire world. Rural women in Nigeria represent a high percentage of the Nigerian 140 million populations (NPC, 2006). Although both men and women in rural areas carry out

their economic activities in agricultural related work, women across the globe have always played major roles in agriculture. They contribute substantially to food production and food security.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2007)

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reported that the majority of the world's poor live in rural areas, and 70 percent of the rural poor are women, majority of whose principal resource is agriculture. A study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), pointed out that if women farmers were given equal access to resources, developing countries would see significant increases in agricultural productivity. Women produce almost half the world's food, but they often work in difficult conditions, with low pay and inadequate access to land, capital, information and they are mainly into subsistence agriculture. Approximately 50% of these set of people are also subjected to a very low scale form of production, with little or no access to information, resources and social amenities that could improve their productivity (Iheduru, 2002).

Due to issues affecting the world in relation to women development, a lot of awareness project were directed at women empowerment by the African Governments and international organizations committed to implementing actions in the area of poverty reduction and the economic empowerment of women. Over the last 25 years, the role of women in agriculture has become a familiar and well-developed subject. This led to the establishment of gender equality around the world. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was established as a separate fund within the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1984 with the aim of empowering women, bearing in mind the outcome of Beijing Conference. Hence, more than 100 countries announced new initiatives to improve the status of women. Furthermore, various countries showed their commitments by outlining modalities for implementation of these plans, thus an overwhelming majority of African Governments placed poverty reduction and empowerment of women among their top priorities for action (Perpetua, 1999).

Due to the recognition of the roles played by rural women in agricultural production, both governmental and non-governmental organization embarked on various projects, which further popularize and improved the living condition of the women. The current issue in rural women development is now tending towards, recognizing the possible ways of sustaining all developmental projects directed at women. According to Adisa and Okunade (2005), many rural development projects and programmes which are gender specific have been introduced to take care of women's needs in the rural areas of the country. These programmes and projects include Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLPRW), Women-In Agriculture (WIA), the Family Support Programme (FSP), Fand those introduced by international agencies UNDP, UNICEF. All these aimed at achieving women empowerment.

In general the problem militating against women development in rural areas, revolve round their inability to develop themselves in the area of their chosen economic activities, because they are regarded as not the original owners or possession of land which they can use as

collateral in securing funds to improve on their activities. Another challenge is the societal culture that regards women as minor in the society while they are deprived of access to information that could better the lives.

This study focuses to analyze the perception of beneficiaries of three selected rural women empowerment projects [Cassava: Adding Values for Africa (C: AVA), NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR FOOD SECURITY (NPFS) and Microfinance in Ogun State, Nigeria with the following objectives to:

- i) Describe the socio-economic characteristics of rural women involved in the selected projects.
- ii) Assess the perception of rural women about the need for selected women empowerment project in Ogun State.
- iii) Determine the perception of the beneficiaries on the effect of the projects on their livelihoods.

Hypothesis of the study

It was hypothesized that there are no significant relationships between the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the perceived effect of the selected project on the livelihood of beneficiaries.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Ogun State, which is located in the southwestern part of Nigeria. It is situated within the tropics covering 16, 409.29 square kilometers with a population of about 4,054,272 (National population commission 2006).

Purposive selection of two senatorial districts out of the three existing senatorial districts, Ogun west and Ogun central Senatorial was chosen due to the existence of the selected projects.

From Ogun central senatorial district, two local governments area selected were Ifo and Ewekoro local governments and from Ogun west senatorial district Egbado south and Ado Odoota Local government area was chosen.

The selected organizations worked with women group of an average seventeen members therefore fifty percent (50%) of each beneficiary women group selected. Interview guide and with three key trained researchers assistant that are trained for a period of two days were employed in obtaining useful data from the respondents.

The consent of the group members was sought verbally and based on their agreement and ethical approval of the group members, the interview guide was administered during the meeting days of the selected women group.

The data were collected by the researcher and the research assistant who translated the interview guide to the illiterate respondents in their local language, while the literate respondents administered the interview guide on their own. The data obtained was statistically analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics appropriately. The hypothesis of the study was tested using chi-square analysis. A total of 143 respondents were selected for this study as shown in Table 1.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Table 2 revealed that the average age of sampled

Table 1. Ogun State Senatorial Districts (showing sampling procedures and sample size).

Implementing organisation	Selected senatorial districts	Selected local government area	Name of group	Number in group	Selected member 50%	
Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme (OGADEP)	Ogun Central	Ifo	CAVA			
			Ifelodun	14	7	
			Soboje	16	8	
			NPFS			
			Oredegbe	14	7	
				Igbesiaye Rorun	22	11
	Ewekoro	CAVA				
		Obalagbe	14	7		
		Agbelere	14	7		
		NPFS				
Ajgunle Fufu		14	7			
			Ajgunle Gari	14	7	
Sub Total				122	61	
Justice Development and Peace Movement (JDPM)	Ogun West	Yewa	CAVA			
			Owolowo	22	11	
			Ifelodun	22	11	
			Microcredit			
			Tepamose	18	9	
				Ore Ofe Oluwa	30	15
	Adoodoota	CAVA				
		Groups 1	24	12		
		Group 2	18	9		
		Microcredit				
Itesiwaju		14	7			
			Halleluyah	16	8	
Sub total				164	82	
Total				2 86	143	

Total number of respondents= (61+82), 143.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by their socio-economic characteristics (n=139).

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean/Mode
Age			
≤ 30 years	20	14.39	
31 - 40 yeas	42	30.22	
41 - 50 years	45	32.37	43.62 years
51 - 60 years	27	19.42	
Over 60 years	5	3.6	
Total	139	100	
Educational Level			
Adult Education	6	4.32	
No formal education	38	27.34	
Primary	62	44.60	Primary
Secondary	22	15.83	
Tertiary	11	7.91	
Total	139	100	

Table 2. Contd.

Marital status			
Married	95	68.35	
Separated	9	6.48	
Single	13	9.35	Married
Widowed	22	15.83	
Total	139	100	
Economic activity			
Artisanship	4	2.88	
Farming	28	20.14	
Food processing	60	43.17	Food Processing
Street Banking	47	33.81	
Total	139	100	
Experience			
Less than 10 years	77	55.40	
10-15 years	39	28.06	
16-20years	16	11.51	
Total	139	100	
Household size			
1-5	66	47.48	
6-10	56	40.29	7 People
11-15	11	7.91	
Not indicated	6	4.32	
Total	139	100	
Religion			
Islam	48	34.53	
Traditional religion	2	1.44	Christianity
Christianity	89	64.03	
Total	139	100	
Membership of social organisation			
Yes	118	84.89	
No	21	15.11	
Total	139	100	
Social status			
Community chief	8	6.78	
Executive member	46	38.98	
Group leader	19	16.10	
No position	45	38.14	
Total	139	100	
Nativity			
Native	98	70.5	
Non native	41	29.5	
Total	139	100	

Source: Field survey 2012.

women was 43.62 years with more than half (about 63%) of the women between the ages of 31 and 50 years,

22.02% above 50 years and 14% less than 30 years. It was revealed that very few (less than 25%) of the respondents

had more than primary education, close to half (44.60%) had primary education while one out of every four women (27.34%) had no formal education at all, About two out of every three (68.35%) of the women were married, 15.83% were widow while the remaining (15.83%) are neither married nor separated.

Majority (43.17%) of the women engage in food processing, 33.81% engage in trading while 20.14% and 2.88% of respondents are farmers and artisans respectively. More than half (55.40%) of the respondents have less than ten years of experience in their respective economic activities while 39.57% have above ten years of experience. Furthermore, a high percentage of (64.03%) were Christians while 34.53% were Muslims, only 5.76% of the respondents were Community Chiefs. Also, about half of the women (46.76%) are either executive members of their association or group leaders while 15.11% of the women respondents are non-members of social groups In general, 70.50% of respondents were natives of their various localities while 29.5 % were non-natives.

The result from Table 2 implies that respondents are within the economically active age group; and it is in support of Fakoya and Daramola (2005) who observed that respondents within this age bracket are more innovative, motivated and adaptable individuals who can cope with wisdom of challenges. This was also the opinion of FAO (1997), Yinusa (1999) and Ayinde et al. (2002). For educational status the women had a low level of formal education, this is in line with the findings of Longe (1988) which reiterated that women are generally not literate in the rural areas. Furthermore Sokoya (2003) observed that women are poorer than their male counterpart because they lack adequate access to educational opportunities.

With the majority of the women engagement in food processing is an indication that the food Processing is a popular enterprise among rural women. This finding is justified by Ogunlela and Adekanye(2009) who opined that women are known to be more active in agricultural activities in sub-saharan African countries. Afolabi (2004) also pointed out that women have virtually taken over the production and processing of staple food.

On religion basis, Christianity is a popular religion among the respondents. The result further showed the dichotomy in the religion spread in Nigeria that northern part is dominated by Muslims while the southern part has relatively more Christians as also reiterated by WHO (2001).

This result also showed that the women are active members of their various social groups. Group membership helps members to become better informed about the world and about new technologies, and groups may serve as a stepping stone to some higher gains or status and serious involvement in the group activities made them contribute meaningfully to their community development. This assertion is in agreement with Awotunde

(1990) that regular participation of all members is a suitable indicator of success.

The fact that majority of the group members were natives would have a positive bearing on the sustainability of the project. This observation may be attributed to the geographical and occupational distribution as well as infrastructural provision of the respondent's household which favours farming (Fapojuwo, 2007).

Description of the perception of beneficiaries about the need for the projects

Respondents level of perception was measured by using a combination of adopted 22 indicators on a five point likert scale. Results of analysis on the perception of beneficiaries about the need for the projects shows a low perception of less than mean score of 66, and above as having high perception about the need for the projects. The result showed that more than half of the respondents (53.24%) adjudged high perception while (46.76%) had low perception about the need for the projects (Table 3).

The distribution of the sampled beneficiaries while considering the projects individually indicated that across all the projects considered the respondents had high perception on the need for the projects except in JDPM C: AVA with low perception. However, the general breakdown of the perception statement result further indicated that individual responses was based on their expectations of what empowerment means to them, their local orientation, belief and knowledge about the goals of the organisation and how the projects affect their livelihood activities.

Perception of respondents on the effect of the projects on their livelihood

Table 4 showed that across all the projects, respondents had high perception for the types of effect the empowerment has on their livelihood. The result x-rayed that respondents had strongly agreed that the projects provided them with opportunities to develop in the area of product packaging (56.12%) and that their products' quality had increased (44.60%), 44.60 and 35.25% strongly disagreed that they had been able to reduce wastages from processing and had improved knowledge on modern tools usage respectively. About 40.29% of the rural women had witnessed increased customer patronage within and outside their communities. Higher proportions also strongly disagreed that their profit margin had not increased (40.29%) and that they would like to continue as the time spent on project meetings was commendable to achievements (37.41%).

The perception of respondents on the effect of the project on their livelihood implies that rural women had mixed feelings towards the projects as they had positive perception of the product packaging, business expansion

Table 3. Description of the perception beneficiaries about the need for the projects.

Statements	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%
1 The projects is concerned with the well-being of rural women	124	(89.21)	15	(10.79)	00	(0.00)	00	(0.00)	00	(0.00)
2 The projects should be scrapped	15	(10.79)	9	(6.47)	00	(0.00)	20	(14.39)	95	(68.35)
3 The projects concentrates on the felt needs of rural women	15	(10.79)	0	(0.00)	00	(0.00)	5	(25.18)	9	(64.03)
4 The project is a waste of time	26	(18.71)	5	(3.60)	15	(10.79)	42	(30.22)	51	(36.69)
5 There is increased in the sales of my product	9	(6.47)	0	(0.00)	9	(6.47)	39	(28.06)	82	(58.99)
6 Even though, I have increase in my sales but project is cumbersome	19	(13.67)	60	(43.17)	21	(15.11)	10	(7.19)	29	(20.86)
7 The officers of the projects are always friendly	3	(2.16)	2	(1.44)	15	(10.79)	55	(39.57)	64	(46.04)
8 The project brought increased unemployment	33	(23.74)	55	(39.57)	33	(23.74)	14	(10.07)	4	(2.88)
9 There is reduction in my waste generation	19	(13.67)	20	(14.39)	15	(10.79)	50	(35.97)	35	(25.18)
10 There is no improvement in the quality of my product	34	(24.46)	16	(11.51)	6	(4.32)	28	(20.14)	55	(39.57)
11 There is increase in the number of customers outside my community	5	(3.60)	19	(13.67)	0	(0.00)	40	(28.78)	51	(53.96)
12 The project has not really added value to my product	24	(17.27)	30	(21.58)	15	(10.79)	32	(23.02)	38	(27.34)
13 The project made me realise the role of belonging to the groups	29	(20.86)	7	(5.04)	12	(8.63)	52	(37.41)	39	(28.06)
14 I feel I can do better without the project	20	(14.39)	13	(11.35)	15	(10.79)	44	(31.65)	47	(33.81)
15 The project has reduced my spending on labour	24	(17.27)	13	(11.51)	1	(0.72)	16	(11.51)	59	(42.45)
16 The project disturbed my relationship with my family due time demand	27	(19.42)	27	(19.42)	8	(5.76)	31	(22.3)	46	(33.09)
17 The project made me have information on the latest innovation	32	(23.02)	5	(3.6)	7	(5.04)	43	(30.94)	52	(37.41)
18 The project is just a top bottom approach	57	(41.01)	16	(11.51)	11	(7.91)	5	(3.60)	50	(35.97)
19 I think I have an improved income	8	(5.76)	14	(10.07)	8	(5.76)	47	(33.81)	62	(44.60)
20 The project has reduced my level of access to information	8	(5.76)	12	(8.63)	22	(15.83)	53	(38.18)	44	(31.65)
21 The project is an eye opener to increased food availability	55	(39.57)	38	(27.34)	10	(7.19)	29	(20.86)	7	(5.04)
22 The technology training is too advance	27	(19.42)	11	(7.91)	25	(17.99)	34	(24.46)	42	(30.22)

Note: 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=undecided, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree for positive statements
Note: 5=strongly disagree, 4=disagree, 3=undecided, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree for negative statements

Source: Field Survey (2012).

expansion, improved knowledge and skills, increased income and balanced emotion while they had negative perception of the credit facilities. This assertion supports Sen (1993) that extension and projects directed at women change the quality of life of women through the vehicle of technology transfer; hence, it is necessary to improve their production potentials by treating

them as economic factors, not as dependent members of the family.

Description of perception of project effect on livelihood

Table 5 presented the result for the respondent's

perception from each perceived effect benefits derived from the projects.

It revealed that by individual projects, JDPM-C: AVA had high effect on access to credit facilities, improved knowledge and skills, business expansion and increased income; OGADEP-C: AVA had high effect on product packaging, access to credit facilities, business expansion, balanced

Table 4. Respondents perception on the of the project on their livelihood

Statement	Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low
Production packaging					
The project provided me with opportunity to develop in the area of products packaging.	78(56.12)	18(12.95)	10(7.19)	12(8.63)	21(15.11)
The quality of my product had not increased.	2(1.44)	10(7.19)	18(12.95)	47(33.81)	62(44.60)
Credit facilities					
I have more and better access to finance	33(23.74)	23(16.55)	17(12.23)	31(22.30)	35(25.02)
The time for loan processing has not reduced	45(32.37)	12(8.63)	17(12.23)	19(13.67)	46(33.09)
Improved knowledge and skills					
I have reduced wastage from my processing	2(1.44)	3(2.16)	25(17.99)	47(33.81)	62(44.60)
I have no improved knowledge on modern tools usage	7(5.04)	32(23.03)	26(18.71)	5(17.99)	49(35.25)
Business expansion					
I experienced improvement in my sales level	19(13.67)	18(12.95)	24(17.27)	18(12.95)	57(41.01)
I did not witness an increase customer patronage within and outside my community	28(20.14)	6(4.32)	4(2.88)	45(32.37)	56(40.29)
Increased income					
My expenditure on labour has been reduced	6(5.04)	7(5.04)	35(25.18)	49(35.25)	62(44.60)
My profit margin has not increased	28(20.14)	6(4.32)	4(2.88)	45(32.37)	56(40.29)
Balance emotion					
The time I spend on project meeting is commendable to my achievement, I would like to continue	31(22.30)	9(6.47)	5(3.60)	42(30.22)	52(37.41)
The officers provides timely solutions to problems	47(33.81)	16(11.51)	18(12.95)	12(8.63)	46(33.09)

Source: Field survey (2012).

balanced emotion and increased income; JDPM-MICRO had high effects on improved knowledge and skills, business expansion, balanced emotion and increased income; while OGADEP-NPFS had high effects on all except improved knowledge and skills and increase income. Further analysis indicated that OGADEP-C: AVA had more effects than other projects.

Result of tested hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the effect of the selected project on the livelihood of beneficiaries.

The socio-economic characteristics considered

were age, religion, marital status, educational level, social status and native status. To test for the relationship between the variables, Chi-square was used. The significance of the relationship was determined at 0.05 level of significance.

The result of the Chi-square analysis on Table 6 shows that, there is a significant relationship between the nature of occupation and effect of the

Table 5. Respondent's perception of effects of the projects on their livelihood activities.

Product packaging	JDPM CAVA	OGADEP CAVA	JDPM MICRO	OGADEP NPFS	TOTAL
Positive	14(10.07)	24(17.27)	17(12.33)	26(18.71)	81(58.27)
Negative	28(20.14)	4(2.88)	21(15.11)	5(3.60)	58(41.73)
Total	42	28	38	31	139(100)
Credit facilities					
Positive	35(25.18)	28(20.14)	35(25.18)	25(17.99)	104(74.82)
Negative	7(5.04)	0(0.00)	25(17.99)	6(4.32)	35(25.18)
Total	42	28	38	31	139(100)
Improved knowledge and skills					
Positive	31(22.30)	14(10.07)	24(17.27)	15(10.79)	114(82.01)
Negative	11(7.91)	14(10.07)	14(10.07)	16(11.51)	25(17.99)
Total	42	28	38	31	139(100)
Business expansion					
Positive	41(29.50)	28(20.14)	37(26.62)	20(14.39)	126(90.65)
Negative	1(0.72)	0(0.00)	1(0.72)	11(7.91)	13(9.35)
Total	42	28	38	31	139(100)
Balanced Emotion					
Positive	15(10.79)	16(11.51)	29(20.86)	25(17.99)	65(46.76)
Negative	27(19.42)	12(8.63)	9(6.47)	6(4.32)	74(53.24)
Total	42	28	38	31	139(100)
Increased income					
Positive	25(17.99)	22(15.83)	31(22.30)	1(0.79)	79(56.83)
Negative	17(12.23)	6(4.32)	7(5.04)	30(21.58)	60(43.17)
Total	42	28	38	31	139(100)

Source: Field survey 2012

Table 6. Chi square analysis of respondents' socio-economic characteristics and the effect on the selected projects.

Variable	Coefficient				
	χ^2	df	Contingency	p-value	Decision
Age	11.68	4	0.15	0.5	NS
Educational status	5.65	5	0.2	0.34	NS
Marital status	3.14	4	0.15	0.53	NS
Nature of occupation	15.38	3	0.32	0	S
Years of experience	3.15	3	0.15	0.37	NS
Household size	0.26	3	0.04	0.97	NS
Religion	0.6	2	0.07	0.74	NS
Membership	0.72	1	0.07	0.39	NS
social status	3.84	3	0.18	0.28	NS
Nativity	1.01	1	0.85	0.6	NS

df = Degree of freedom. Source: Field Survey (2012).

Projects ($\chi^2 = 15.38$, $p < 0.05$), therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, while accepting the alternate. This

means that the nature of occupation determines the effect of the selected projects on the livelihood of the

beneficiaries. Therefore a respondent engaged in cassava flakes garri production might derive more benefit as a result of the nature of the project more than respondents that are involved in cassava flour or fufu production. This could be as a result of the sophisticated technological dimension introduced to garri production. This view supports Aworh (2008) that technology has improved livelihood through generation of employment in the rural areas, reduce post-harvest cassava losses and provide a good source of income to farmers and processors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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