

Evaluation of the perceived constraints of Farmers' participation in community development project in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT :Many community development projects have been implemented in Ebonyi state but the constraints of farmers' participation in the community development projects have not been ascertained. This study identified and evaluates the perceived constraints faced by rural farmers' in Ebonyi state that inhibits them from participating actively in community development projects. Data, collected using structured questionnaire from 240 randomly selected farmers were analyzed using mean, frequency, table, percentages and rank. Result showed that many community development projects have been implemented in Ebonyi state. Results revealed that the community development projects mostly embarked upon by the communities were school building projects (80.83%), and road projects (63.75%). The result revealed that various constraints such as, projects not based on the needs of the people ($\bar{X}=4.53$), and exclusion from project planning ($\bar{X}=4.52$), inhibited the farmers' participation in community development projects. The study concluded that poor/lack of participation in community development was due to the constraints faced by rural farmers. The study recommended that enlightenment campaigns should be undertaken to sensitize and sustain farmers' interest and abreast them of the gains from participating in community development projects by Agriculture Development Program (ADP) Non Governmental Organizations and other agencies involved in Rural Development (RD) (NGOs).

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I. INTRODUCTION

The extent of poverty in the rural communities has led to the implementation of a different of developmental programmes and projects, aimed at improving rural livelihoods; thus many of the developmental programmes and projects have been implemented with the argument that future economic, social, and environmental development in the rural communities is best secured by improving rural economy, which is continuously marked by high levels of unemployment (Fabricius and Koch, 2004). In spite of many efforts made to reduce poverty by national as well as international actors, it is not all types of community development projects that create the desired contributions to rural economy.

Many farmers in the rural community in Ebonyi state are disenchanted with some of the community development projects implemented in their community, hence leading to poor participation in community development projects.

Community Development refers to the health, housing, education, and welfare (including economic welfare) conditions of individuals, households, and communities within a locality (Hindson and Vicente-Hindson, 2005).

Community development can be defined as a process where community members come together to deliberate on the issues affecting them, take collective action, and generate solutions to common problems. Community wellbeing (economic, social, environmental and cultural) often improves from this type of collective action being taken at the grassroot level. Community development ranges from small initiatives within a small group to large initiatives that involve the broader community (PeerNetBC, 2012).

Participation means taking part, or being involved. Hence farmers' participation in community development means their being part of the decision making, planning, and the execution of the project.

Participation with regard to community based projects include peoples' involvement in decision making process, in implementing programmes, their sharing of benefits of development programmes and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes. Farmers' participation is considered necessary to get community support for agricultural development projects. Farmers' participation is an important factor for sustainable agriculture in rural areas. Without participation, there are obviously no partnerships, no developments and no programmes (Nwaobiala, et al., 2014).

Olori and Okide (2014) identified many factor as constraining the sustainability of community development projects in Rivers State. These factors included ignorance, high level of poverty within the locality, lack of transparency and accountability among community leaders, especially on funds made available for development projects, poor leadership, and poor involvement of community members in development projects, corruption and lack of maintenance culture.

The objective of this study is to find out the constraints to participation in community development project faced by farmers in Ebonyi state, and to make recommendation to encourage active participation in community development projects.

II. METHODOLOGY

Area of the study

Ebonyi State, the area of this study was created on October 1, 1996, with Abakaliki as its capital. The state was carved out of the former Abia and Enugu states.

It lies approximately at longitude 7° 30' and 8° 30' E and latitude 5° 40' and 6° 45' N with a land mass of approximately 5,530 square kilometers and a population of 1,453, 882 persons (OnlineNigeria,2003). The state is made up of thirteen Local Government Areas (LGAs). These are (1) Abakaliki, (2) Afikpo North, (3) Afikpo South, (4) Ebonyi, (5) Ezza North, (6) Ezza South, (7) Ikwo, (8) Ishielu, (9) Ivo, (10) Izzi, (11) Ohaozara, (12) Ohaukwu and (13) Onicha. The state is also divided into three political zones which are also the agricultural zones, namely, Ebonyi North comprising Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Ishielu, Ohaukwu and Izzi LGA, Ebonyi Central made up of Ikwo, Ezza North and Ezza South LGAs, and Ebonyi South made up of Afikpo North, Afikpo South, Ivo, Ohaozara and Onicha LGAs.

The people of Ebonyi State are predominantly farmers and traders. The main crops produced in the State are rice, yam, palm produce, cocoa, maize, groundnut, plantain, banana, cassava, melon, sugar cane, beans, fruits and vegetables. Fishing is also carried out in Afikpo. The state is blessed with mineral resources such as lead, limestone, zinc and marble.

III. SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The population for this study comprised all the farmers in Ebonyi state. Multi- stage sampling technique was used for the selection of sample for the study.

The study covered the three zones of the state – Ebonyi North, Ebonyi Central and Ebonyi South. The reason was to ensure adequate coverage and proper representation of the farmers in the state. The second stage was the random selection of two Local Government Areas from each of the zones in the state.

Ebonyi North: Abakaliki, Izzi, **Ebonyi Central:** Ikwo, Ezza North, **Ebonyi South:** Afikpo North, Ohaozara
The third stage of the sampling involved the random sampling of four communities from each of the local government areas (24 communities). The following communities were sampled:

Abakaliki: Azugwu, Ndiagu Okpuitumo, Enwagba Enyigba, Nkaliki

Izzi: Ndieze, Igbeagu, Agbaja, Mgbala Ukwu

Ikwo: Ohankwu, Agubia, Ameri, Onuebonyi echara

Ezza North: Achara Ezza, Amagu, Ugboji, Ekka

Afikpo North: Ozizza, Ohaisu, Nkpoghoru, Itim

Ohaozara: Obiozara uburu, Ugwulangwu, Uburu, Okposi

The fourth stage was random selection of 10 farmers from each of the communities from the list of farmers obtained from the state Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). This gave a total of 240 farmers, who served as the respondents.

IV. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected from two sources: primary and secondary.

Field survey constituted the primary source of data. It was undertaken using structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contained questions relevant to the objectives of the study. These were presented in sections, such that each section addressed one objective. This was however, complemented with interview schedule for in-depth information and to address the peculiarities of illiterate respondents. The secondary data comprised

publications such as research reports, academic journals, conference proceedings, newsletters, text books, internet materials and annual reports of relevant Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

Results and Discussion

1. Community development projects

Table 1: Distribution of the farmers according to community development projects embarked upon

Community development projects	*Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
School building	194	80.83	1 st
Farm project	88	36.67	6 th
Water project	122	50.83	4 th
Road maintenance project	153	63.75	2 nd
Hospital building	149	62.08	3 rd
Viewing centers	33	13.75	10 th
Electricity project	109	45.42	5 th
Security project	48	20.00	7 th
Legal advisory project	9	3.75	12 th
Scholarship award project	40	16.67	8 th
Erosion control	40	16.67	8 th
Others	13	5.42	11 th

Source: Field survey data, 2016 * Multiple responses

The community development projects embarked upon and executed by the people are shown in Table 1. The result shows that school building project had the highest rating of 80.83 percent. This was followed by road building projects (63.75%), Legal advisory projects had least rating of 3.75 percent and ranked 12th. The highest rating for school building project could be exploratory of the importance attached to education by the farmers. The more an individual is educated, the more likely he would accept and participate in development projects. Education and training produce labour force that is easier to mobilize, more skilled, amenable to risk taking, and adaptable to the needs of changing economy. (Imoh, U-James and Nwachukwu, 2009).

The second ranking of road project could be attributed to the dominance of agriculture in the study area. The roads are imperative for the evacuation of farm produce. The farmers may have to undertaken road construction and repairs to ease access. In line with this, Nnadi and Amaechi (2007) observed that bad roads are problems to agricultural development.

Generally, it could be assumed that the projects indicated by the farmers were based on their felt needs and the consciousness created by hardship suffered by the people. They mobilized to provide them through collective effort and resolve hence diverse community development projects.

2. Participation in community development projects by the farmers

Table 2: Distribution of the farmers according to participation in community development projects

Participated in the Project	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	224	93.33
No	16	6.67
Total	240	100.00

Source: Field survey data, 2016

Result in Table 2 shows that more than 92 percent of the farmers participated in development projects in their community, while 6.67percent indicated that they did not participate in community development projects. The high percentage of farmers who participated in community development projects indicates that the farmers are community oriented and that the community development project is based on their felt need, hence they participated greatly. They saw the projects as their own. Abubakar et al. (2012) in their study observed that success in participation in community development was the effort of a local community which is supplemented or aroused by the government authority.

3. Reasons for participating in community development projects

Table 3: Distribution of the farmers according to perceived reasons for their participation

Reasons	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree	Mean \bar{X}	Remark
To better the life of the citizenry	169 (75.45)	50 (22.32)	5 (2.23)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	4.73	A
Employment provision	130 (58.04)	79 (35.27)	13 (5.80)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.89)	4.50	A
Increase income	125 (55.80)	82 (36.61)	13 (5.80)	2 (0.89)	2 (0.89)	4.46	A
Reduce food insecurity	105 (46.88)	110 (49.11)	8 (3.57)	1 (0.45)	0 (0.00)	4.42	A
Diversify opportunities	104 (46.43)	93 (41.52)	25 (11.16)	1 (0.45)	1 (0.45)	4.33	A
Reduce poverty	120 (53.57)	91 (40.63)	11 (4.91)	1 (0.45)	1 (0.45)	4.46	A
Update skill, knowledge and attitude	132 (58.93)	65 (29.02)	24 (10.71)	2 (0.89)	1 (0.45)	4.45	A
Provide services at easy daily reach	117 (52.23)	75 (33.48)	26 (11.61)	6 (2.68)	0 (0.00)	4.35	A
To improve community relationship	127 (56.70)	82 (36.61)	12 (5.36)	3 (1.34)	0 (0.00)	4.49	A
To improve rural economy	136 (60.71)	75 (33.48)	8 (3.57)	5 (2.23)	0 (0.00)	4.53	A

Source: Field Survey, 2016 Maximum score = 5, Minimum score = 1, Agreed => 3.0, Undecided =3.0, Disagree = <3.0

Table 3 shows the farmers' level of agreement with the listed reasons for their participation in community development projects. The result shows that all the listed reasons for the farmers' participation in community development project had mean scores greater than 3.0. Using the discriminating index of 3.0 for undecided, > 3.0 for agreement, and <3.0 for disagreement, all the items were important reasons by the farmers. The result revealed that to better the life of the citizenry had the highest rating as reason for participating in community development projects (\bar{X} =4.73). It had the highest level of agreement by the farmers. Following this was the reason to improve rural economy with a mean score of 4.53. Also, employment provision as a reason had a mean score of 4.50. The result further revealed that the reason to diversify opportunities had the lowest mean score of 4.33.

One of the reasons why farmers participate in community development project is to improve community relations and to create the sense of togetherness. According to Njunwa (2010), solidarity is very important in development processes because it unites people from different places to work together to achieve development. Community participation brings together different people to work together as a team to achieve developmental purposes. Therefore, the community participation is important because it ensures that all the people in the communities have the consciousness and work together to solve their problems.

4. Perceived constraints to participating in community development projects by the farmers

Table 4: Distribution of the farmers according to perceived constraints to participation in community development projects

Constraints	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean	Remark
Project areas not based on felt needs of the people	98 (43.75)	42(18.75)	10(4.46)	25(11.16)	49(21.88)	3.51	A
Poor social status	104(46.43)	92(41.07)	9(4.02)	10(4.46)	9(4.02)	4.21	A
Low level of education	123(54.91)	70(31.25)	10(4.46)	14(6.25)	7(3.13)	4.29	A
Poor technical skills	122(54.46)	82(36.61)	10(4.46)	6(2.68)	4(1.79)	4.39	A
Exclusion from project planning	118(52.68)	72(32.14)	15(6.70)	14(6.25)	5(2.23)	4.27	A
Poor project result	95(42.41)	101(45.09)	9(4.02)	15(6.70)	4(1.79)	4.20	A
Lack of continuity	107(47.77)	95(42.41)	5(2.23)	10(4.46)	7(3.13)	4.27	A
Corruption by leaders	120(53.57)	78(34.82)	11(4.91)	7(3.13)	8(3.57)	4.32	A
Lack of equipment to operate the project(s)	118(52.68)	87(38.84)	13(5.80)	3(1.34)	3(1.34)	4.40	A
Inadequate government policies	121(54.02)	83(37.05)	14(6.25)	3(1.34)	3(1.34)	4.41	A
Inadequacy of fund	140(62.50)	73(32.59)	7(3.13)	3(1.34)	1(0.45)	4.55	A

Source: Field survey data, 2016 Maximum score = 5, Minimum score = 1, Agreed = >3.0, Undecided = 3.0, Disagree = < 3.0

The result in Table 4 shows the various constraints that affect the farmers' participation in community development projects. Using the discriminating index 3.0 for undecided, >3.0 for agreement, and < 3.0 for disagreement, the result indicates that all the itemized constraints to participating in community development projects were agreed to. The mean scores ranged from 3.51 to 4.55 and the standard deviation from 2.45 to 2.90. The highest mean score, 4.52 was recorded for inadequacy of funds. Both lack of equipment and inadequate government policies had mean scores of 4.40 and 4.41 respectively. Corruption by leaders recorded 4.32 mean score. This was followed by lack of technical skill with a mean score of 4.39. Low level of education and lack of continuity had 4.29 and 4.27 mean scores respectively. Also, poor social status had a mean score of 4.21, while poor project result had a mean score of 4.20. In the same manner, project not based on the felt-needs of the people had a mean score of 3.51. The highest rating for inadequacy of fund implies the premium placed on fund in community development project. Fund is critical at each stage in the execution of community development projects. Beside the purchase of the necessary materials, the availability imbues confidence among the people. Nnadi and Amaechi (2007) recognized the importance of fund in actualizing community development initiatives and also observed that failure in executing several community development projects directly and indirectly could be linked with fund. Another high rating was for lack of equipment to execute the project(s). This implies that inadequacy or lack of acquisition and supply of equipment can also constraint farmers from participating in community development project. Tedious, manual processes of performing duties associated with the project could be disincentives to farmers from participating in the project

Exclusion from project planning also had a high rating indicating that farmers see their exclusion in the initial stage of the community development project as a constraint that hinders them from participating in the project. It could be assumed that the farmers might see it as a slight that they were not included or contacted in the planning stage of the community development project.

The lowest rating for projects not based on the felt needs of the farmers implies that many farmers do not see it as a major constraint that hinders them from participating in the community development project.

Several factors were identified by Olori and Okide (2014) as constraining the sustainability of community development projects in Rivers State. These factors included ignorance, high level of poverty within the locality, lack of transparency and accountability among community leaders, especially on funds made available for development projects, poor leadership, and poor involvement of community members in development projects, corruption and lack of maintenance culture.

In another perspective, the Third National Fadama Development Programme, -community driven development (CDD) and participatory community planning (PCP) areas of constraints, bothered on their needs not being met, poor timing, low competence of extension officers and duplication of programme (Koyenikan

and Ikharea, 2014). According to Imoh, U-James and Nwachukwu (2009), high cost of living, lack of economic power, lack of time, high cost of living, and embezzlement of funds were the a major hindrance to active participation in development projects in Akwa Ibom state.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Many community development projects have been initiated in Ebonyi state in the face of many developmental challenges faced by the rural farmers. However, most of these community development projects collapsed because not all the necessary stakeholders were part of the decision making during the projects' initial stage and beyond. However, participating in community development project could impact new knowledge, competence and experience that could facilitate livelihoods.

The study specifically sought to among other things, identify the community development projects, the number for farmers who participates in the community development projects, reasons for participating in community development project and ascertain the perceived constraints to participating in community development projects.

Conclusion

Rural farmers are formidable population for resounding success in community development projects. Their participation in turn polishes their skill, knowledge and attitude for excellence in their livelihoods. These are made prominent in areas of increased income, increased economic activities, better infrastructural development, and increased production capacity, among others.

Despite the advantages associated with participating in community development project some farmers in Ebonyi state still do not participate and some participate sparingly.

Recommendations

1. Enlightenment campaigns should be initiated to sensitize farmers on the gains from participating in community development projects, as well as encourage their participation by Ebonyi state Agriculture Development Programme (ADP), agencies involved in Rural Development (RD) and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
2. Rural farmers should be inspired to participate in community development projects through subtle policies that encourage their agricultural production by the government and Non Government Organizations
3. Training programmes should be organized by government agencies, Agricultural Development Programmes, Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI), etc and Non Government Organizations with mandates in Rural Development for farmers in the areas of leadership, technical and social skills for community development projects.
4. Rural farmers should be consulted before community development projects are commenced, in order to find out their view on the community development project. They should be involved at the initial stages of the project in order to base the projects on their felt-need.

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