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ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES RENDERED BY NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN ENHANCING FARMERS' PRODUCTION IN EBONYI STATE

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ABSTRACT

In order that agriculture may continue to play its leading role as the bedrock for every nation's economy, there is the need for support and sustenance from relevant organisations. Hence, this study examined services rendered by non-governmental organisations involved in agricultural related activities in Ebonyi State. Three NGOs were purposively selected because of their involvement in agricultural related activities. The studied NGOs were Omemma Palm Produce Union (OPPU), Ngodo Women Association (NWA) and Better Life for Rice Association (BLRA). A sample of 120 beneficiaries of the NGOs services were randomly selected for this study. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Result shows that 59.2% of the beneficiaries were within the age bracket of 41-50 years, 73.3% were females, 83.3% were married and beneficiaries were 100% Christians. More than half of the beneficiaries (57.5%) had formal education with 32.5% having primary education. It was found that the three organisations provide credit facilities for beneficiaries. Also, OPPU provide services such as Oil palm fruits processing and training/technical knowledge; NWA provide services such as cassava processing and access to fertilizer while BLRA provide services which include rice processing, fertilizer, improved seeds and rice seedlings provision. The provision of credit facilities by NGOs was on occasional basis as indicated by beneficiaries. Improved seeds were occasionally provided by NWA (100.0%) and BLRA (100.0%). Almost all beneficiaries (93.6%) of OPPU enjoyed provision of technical knowledge. Level of output of OPPU beneficiaries (79.0%) was perceived to increase more than those of NWA (66.7%) and BLRA (45.5%) beneficiaries. Majority of the beneficiaries are constrained by poor market prices of produce (100.0%), high cost of labour (100.0%) and inadequate credit facilities (98.3%). Constraints were high for NWA and BLRA beneficiaries than OPPU beneficiaries. NGOs should endeavor to provide adequate resources needed by beneficiaries for actualisation and sustainability of program objectives. There is the need for NGOs to collaborate with international agencies interested in agricultural related services in order to overcome financial associated constraints.

Keywords: Non-governmental organisations, production level, beneficiaries, services

INTRODUCTION

The rural people are the most deprived and neglected in that they have least access to essential services such as health, education, housing and other services (Laah, Adefila and Yusuf, 2014). The rural areas are the seat of agricultural production and for agriculture to play this vital foundational role in the growth and development of a nation's economy, agriculture as a necessity has to grow and develop. This growth and development is achieved through making available adequate information on improved practices to the rural farmers and enable them acquire knowledge and appropriate skills required for improvement in agricultural production. The farmers according to Akinbile *et al.* (2006) should be assisted by extension organisations to have current knowledge of improved sources of information and have access to all inputs needed for effective production.

Agricultural extension creates the opportunities for rural development, which is *sine qua none* to the development of agriculture. According to Non Governmental Organisation Management School (2017) in Switzerland, participatory development is the most important approach towards enabling communities to help themselves and sustain efforts in development work. In this regard, agricultural extension assists the rural people to identify and execute viable

projects through self-help efforts for the actualization of their agricultural and welfare goals. In the achievement of the desired targets or objectives in agriculture, in terms of adequate food production and provision of substantial support for the local industries, the practice of agriculture must not be left in the hands of the very few. It requires and demands that all hands must be on deck and ample efforts exercised by all the relevant groups and sectors, among which are related NGOs.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have positive characteristics which make their impact more readily felt and their activities result-oriented. They emphasize self-reliance and underline popular participation in their activities. Mansuri and Rao (2004) viewed rural development as the participation of the people in a mutual learning experience involving them, their local external change agents and outside resources. Since NGOs operate outside the government bureaucracy, they are more flexible in their programmes and have the advantage of working directly with grassroot groups. The NGOs usually focus on the poorest segments of the society which in many instances do not benefit from government services coupled with the fact that most times, beneficiaries' communities are located in remote areas. The overall objective of NGO intervention is to enable these disadvantaged groups to share more fully in identifying and

developing programmes to meet their own basic needs. Also, communities are no longer seen as recipients of development programmes; rather, they have become critical stakeholders that have an important role to play in the management of programmes and projects in their areas (NGO Management School, 2017). Such participation ensures that these programmes are compatible with local conditions, culture and possibilities. The ultimate measure of the success or failure of any NGO assistance is not necessarily the material aspects of a particular project, but the extent to which the beneficiaries have moved from dependency to self-reliance.

Thus, the aim of NGOs' intervention is local community action. For Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to bring about development to the communities they work with, it is imperative that they effectively employ participatory methodologies for their beneficiaries to take initiative and action in planning for the development of their communities Tsiga, Hofisi and Mago (2017). The NGOs tend to have accurate knowledge and understanding of local needs and capabilities. With and through their local counterparts, they are usually able to locate individuals within communities who have the requisite skills to undertake projects as well as find materials if they are available. To attain their objectives, they take risks much more readily than do the government officials and the agencies. Their objective is to demonstrate a project or technique which can then be replicated on a large scale, either by the local government or by official donor agencies, with or without the assistance of the NGOs. The NGOs have been noted for their cost effectiveness that is, providing the same or better services for lower administrative and operational cost. Their ideology is mainly based on the idea of learning together, rather than the mere transfer of knowledge or any other traditional form of technical support from above.

Non-governmental organisations involved in agriculture attempt to support and sustain the practice of agriculture in order to contribute their quota in attaining the ultimate goal in agriculture. These NGOs involved in agriculture extend to members/participants or beneficiaries such things as credit facilities, improved practices, dissemination of information, enable knowledge acquisition and skills in the use and adoption of improved practices. Their effectiveness in these efforts is to potentially equip participants/beneficiaries, improve their practices and sustenance and this will no doubt contribute substantially to the growth and development of agriculture in the local government areas in particular and the nation as a whole. Despite the efforts of public and non-governmental agricultural organisations, farmers are not better off as they still

have low income and cannot meet up with demand for food as there is a huge volume of food importation. To compound the problem, there is dwindling efforts of various agricultural organisations as it concerns their activities and support to farmers/beneficiaries in their agricultural production due to limited resources. In spite of the giant stride by public agricultural extension organisations and the worthwhile efforts of the NGOs involved in agriculture as they influence the practice of agriculture, there is still much to be done. The NGOs involved in agriculture therefore in their efforts are playing a complementary roles with public agricultural organisations. It is in the efforts at discovering the extent to which these NGOs are involved in agriculture and effectiveness in rendering their services/assistance to participants/beneficiaries in their agricultural production that this study was designed. Hence, specific objectives of this were to determine types of services rendered by NGOs, extent to which beneficiaries derived benefit from each NGO's services, level of production and constraints encountered by beneficiaries of NGOs' services in their enterprises.

METHODOLOGY

Ebonyi State is a State in South-east Nigeria created in 1996. It is made up of 13 Local Government Areas and lies within longitude $7^{\circ}3$ N and $5^{\circ}4$ E with a land mass approximated at 5,932 square kilometres. The State shares a border with Benue State to the North, Enugu State to the west, Imo and Abia States to the south and Cross River State to the east. The people of Ebonyi State are predominantly farmers and traders. Food crops produced include yam, cassava, cocoyam, potatoes, rice, maize, and various types of vegetables. Tree crops produced are oil palm, mango, oranges, coconut etc. Livestock kept include goat, sheep, cow, horses and poultry birds.

The population of the study is beneficiaries of services of registered non-governmental organisations. Three NGOs out of the 101 NGOs registered in the state were purposively selected because of their involvement in agriculture and agricultural related activities in the state. These NGOs are Omemma Palm Produce Union (OPPU), Ngodo Women Association (NWA), Better Life Rice Association (BLRA) with 200, 50 and 50 beneficiaries, respectively. Forty percent of the beneficiaries were proportionally and randomly selected to give a total of 120 respondents for this study. Primary data was obtained through the use of structured interview schedule Data collected was analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Respondents' level of production was determined by asking respondents to indicate whether they experience



increase in their level of production as a result of NGOs services with a dichotomy response of yes or no with scores of 1 and 0 assigned respectively. Thereafter, respondents were asked to indicate whether the increase experienced was low or high.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics of respondents

The result in Table 1 shows that 59.2% of the respondents were within the age bracket of 41-50 years. The age distribution as shown in Table 1 reveals that selected NGOs have more of older ones (above 40 years: OPPU - 71.3%, NWA - 70.0%, BLRA - 90.0%) as beneficiaries of their activities and services rendered. This may have implication for policy formulation with regards to participation in agricultural related activities and labour supply. The adults may not be less risk averse and as such may not be fully involved in agricultural activities that may concern adoption of new practices more readily than the younger people. It is necessary that the NGOs encourage the young able-bodied persons to participate in their activities and projects. The result of this study negates finding by Laah, Adefila and Yusuf (2014) who found that most respondents involved in community participation in Plateau state are 21 to 30 and 31 to 40 years which simply explains the full involvement of the active age group in community participation.

The percentage distribution of respondents by sex shows that substantial proportion of the respondents were females which indicates that the activities carried out or services rendered by the NGOs tends to favour more women (73.3%) than men (26.7%). As reflected in Table 1, 83.0% of the respondents were married. Marital status determines how decisive an individual is positioned to demonstrate or show a mark of social obligation and may sometime indicate a complementary source of labour input. By customs and from traditional point of view, a married person in areas covered by this study is highly respected and considered worthy that married applicants are probably more favoured during quest for participation than the unmarried. It was found that Christianity (100.0%) was widely practiced by respondents in the study area. This shows the predominant of Christians in the study area.

Respondents who had no formal education were 40.8%, 1.7% had adult education, 32.5% had primary education, 17.5% had secondary education and 7.5% had tertiary education. It is evident from this result that majority of the beneficiaries have the ability to read and write. It was found that OPPU had more of beneficiaries with no formal education, primary and secondary education compare to the other studied NGOs. Very few of the respondents (7.5%) had tertiary education.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on their personal characteristics

Age	OPPU		NWA		BLRA		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
21-30	5	6.3	2	10.0	-	-	7	5.8
31-40	18	22.5	4	20.0	2	10.0	24	20.0
41-50	45	56.3	12	60.0	14	70.0	71	59.2
> 50	12	15.0	2	10.0	4	20.0	18	15.0
Sex								
Male	18	22.5	6	30.0	8	40.0	32	26.7
Female	62	77.5	14	70.0	12	60.0	88	73.3
Marital status								
Single	5	6.3	-	-	2	10.0	7	5.83
Married	68	85.0	17	85.0	15	75.0	100	83.3
Divorced	-	-	-	-	3	15.0	3	2.5
Widowed	7	8.8	3	15.0	-	-	10	8.3
Religion								
Christianity	80	100.0	20	100.0	20	100.0	120	100.0
Educational attainment								
No formal education	37	46.25	5	25.0	7	35.0	49	40.8
Adult literacy	-	-	2	10.0	-	-	2	1.7
Primary	28	35.0	7	35.0	4	20.0	39	32.5
Secondary	12	15.0	4	20.0	5	25.0	21	17.5
Tertiary	3	3.75	2	10.0	4	20.0	9	7.5

Omemma Palm Produce Union (OPPU), Ngodo Women Association (NWA), Better Life Rice Association (BLRA)



Types of services carried out by NGOs

It was found in Table 2 that the three selected NGOs for this study provided credit facilities for beneficiaries (100.0%). In addition to provision of credit facilities, OPPU provided services such as Oil palm fruits processing (100.0%) and training/technical knowledge (100.0%); NWA rendered services such as cassava processing (100.0%), access to fertilizer (100.0%)

and improved seeds (100.0%), while BLRA provide services which include rice processing (100.0%), improved seeds (100.0%) and rice seedlings provision (100.0%). This shows that NGOs are assisting the rural farmers where they are situated in their agriculture and agricultural related activities by extending these assistance and services to them.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of activities undertaken by each NGO

Activities/services undertaken by each NGO	OPPU		NWA		BLRA		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Provision of credit facilities	80	100.0	20	100.0	20	100.0	120	100.0
Processing of oil palm fruits	80	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	80	100.0
Processing of rice	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20	100.0	20	100.0
Processing of cassava	0.0	0.0	20	100.0			20	100.0
Raising of oil palm seedlings	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Provision of fertilizer	0.0	0.0	20	100.0	0.0	0.0	20	100.0
Provision of improved seeds	0.0	0.0	20	100.0	20	100.0	40	100.0
Raising of rice seedlings	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20	100.0	20	100.0
Provision of agro-chemicals	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rearing of poultry birds	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hatching of day old chicks	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Provision of training and technical knowledge	80	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	80	100.0
Provision of vaccines	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Extent to which beneficiaries derived benefit from each NGO's services

The provision of credit facilities by NGOs was on occasional basis for all OPPU beneficiaries and majority of NWA (85.0%) and BLRA (80.0%) beneficiaries. Very few NWA (15.0%) and BLRA (20.0%) beneficiaries indicated that they always had access to credit facilities. Improved seeds were occasionally provided by NWA (100.0%) and BLRA (100.0%). Majority of the beneficiaries (93.6%) of OPPU enjoyed provision of technical knowledge; however access to information on

improved seeds (96.3%) was on occasional basis. Majority of NWA beneficiaries (95.0%) occasionally had access to fertilizer. Also, access to improved seeds was on occasional basis for all NWA and BLRA beneficiaries. Services such as processing of cassava were always rendered by NWA and BLRA to all their beneficiaries. Beneficiaries of BLRA all enjoyed rice processing services. It can be inferred that occasional provision of credit facilities may not be adequate to the level desired by the beneficiaries and this can limit the expansion of beneficiaries' enterprises.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of the extent to which beneficiaries benefit from each NGO's services

Services undertaken by each NGO	OPPU			NWA			BLRA		
	A	O	R	A	O	R	A	O	R
Provision of credit facilities	0.0	100.0	0.0	15.0	85.0	0.0	20.0	80.0	0.0
Processing of oil palm fruits	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Provision of fertilizer	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	95.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Provision of improved seeds	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
Provision of information on improved seeds	3.7	96.3		25.0	75.0		10.0	90.0	0.0
Provision of technical knowledge	93.6	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Processing of rice	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Processing of cassava	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0

A = Always, O = Occasionally, R = Rarely

Level of production

Beneficiaries of OPPU were into processing of oil palm produce, while NWA and

BLRA beneficiaries engage in crop production. It was found that all beneficiaries indicated that NGOs services bring about increase in their level



of production. Majority of OPPU beneficiaries (75.2%) indicated that they experienced high level of output compared to NWA (50.0%) and BLRA (23.4%) beneficiaries. Increase in the level of OPPU beneficiaries' output might be as a result of technical support services provided for

beneficiaries on oil palm processing, while low level of production experienced by NWA and BLRA beneficiaries might be due to associated production constraints particularly with regard to inputs.

Table 4: Level of production of beneficiaries

Level of production	OPPU		NWA		BLRA	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Increase in production						
Yes	80	100.0	20	100.0	20	100.0
No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Level of increase						
Low	20	24.8	10	50.0	15	76.6
High	60	75.2	10	50.0	5	23.4

Constraints encountered by beneficiaries of NGOs' services in their enterprises

The result in Table 5 reveals that all the beneficiaries were constrained by poor market prices of produce (100.0%) and high cost of labour (100.0%). Other constraints experienced by majority of the respondents were inadequate credit

facilities (98.3%), inadequate improved seeds (87.5) and inadequate fertilizer (90.0%). Poor market price will not provide incentive for beneficiaries to increase production. Also, it can be inferred that inadequate improved seeds and fertilizer contributed to low level of production experienced by NWA and BLRA beneficiaries.

Table 5: Constraints encountered by beneficiaries of NGOs' services

Constraints	OPPU		NWA		BLRA		TOTAL	
	Serious	Not serious	Serious	Not serious	Serious	Not serious	Serious	Not serious
Inadequate credit facilities	97.5	2.5	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	98.3	1.7
Inadequate improved seeds	0.0	0.0	90.0	10.0	85.0	15.0	87.5	12.5
Inadequate fertilizer	0.0	0.0	80.0	20.0	100.0	0.0	90.0	10.0
High cost of labour	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
Poor market price	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that beneficiaries of NGOs services were in their active and productive years. Hence, they will be able to ensure continuity of services rendered by the NGOs and also help in actualization of intervention objectives as program implementation needs able bodied men. However, not all beneficiaries were formally educated and those who were formally educated had low educational qualification. Omemma Palm Produce Union (OPPU) beneficiaries regularly enjoyed technical assistance during oil palm processing, while access to fertilizer and improved seeds by Ngodo Women Association (NWA) and Better Life Rice Association (BLRA) beneficiaries was sparing. Thus, OPPU beneficiaries experienced more increase in their level of production compared to NWA and BLRA beneficiaries. Considerable increase in level of production is hinged on availability and accessibility to various inputs needed by beneficiaries for production. Beneficiaries were constrained by array of challenges such as poor market prices of produce, high cost of labour, inadequate credit facilities and

inadequate improved seeds/fertilizer. Objectives of NGOs become impaired when needed resources by beneficiaries are not available. Thus, it was recommended that NGOs should endeavor to provide adequate resources needed by beneficiaries for actualisation and sustainability of program objectives. There is the need for NGOs to collaborate with international agencies interested in agricultural related services in order to overcome financial and other associated constraints of beneficiaries.

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