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Evaluation of the impact of Non-governmental organisation developmental programmes on the livelihood of some rural communities in Nasarawa state.

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Abstract

This study evaluates the impact of Actionaid developmental activities in some communities in Nasarawa state. The approach used was looking at the situation before and after the intervention of Actionaid in these communities. Results from the study shows that the lives of the people of taffected communities have witnessed considerable improvement in terms of their knowledge and application of good hygiene, better attendance of hospital for babies²-deliveries as well as postnatal care. The people now are economically better as more people can now eat three square meals per day as opposed to just one or two in the past. It was also shown that there are now primary schools and health centres in these communities thus making it possible for children that would have been out of school to be in schools and making health care delivery to be at that doorstep of the people of these communities. The studies has thus confirmed that Actionaid is not just out as a noise making NGOs but really interested and committed to the development of less privileged members of the rural communities in Nigeria. It is also hoped that more efforts by various NGOs and government would facilitate rapid rural areas development that would help in promoting good succession in agricultural development since young people would be ready to stay in such developed rural areas and consequently embrace agriculture as a profession.

INTRODUCTION

Rural areas in Nigeria are agrarian in nature and are naturally neglected in terms of physical infrastructural and social amenities development. The rural sector constitutes the economically backward areas of Nigeria that has been given less or no attention by people in government despite the importance of the rural populace as the provider of food and by implication the feeder of the nation (Olatunbosun, 1973). In spite of the fact that Nigeria has been a sovereign state for over four decades, the Nigerians that have been controlling the affair of the state after the exit of the colonial power have continue to pursue developmental policies that resembles in many ways those of the colonial administrators. Consequently, our rural communities have been alienated from the developmental agenda of government. One of the serious implications of this poor state of development of our rural areas is the migration of able bodies' youths that would have stay to develop these areas into urban area (Olatunbosun and Olayide *et al*, 1983). This in itself has serious repercussion for crime increase and other social vices in the country. It also has a serious implication for agricultural development as well as

succession problem in agriculture since the migrated youths will never return to embrace agriculture as occupation again.

One argument that is often put forward as government excuse for failure to develop the rural areas is inadequacy of funds and it has often been argued that government alone cannot fund development. The perceived failure of government and government institutions to meet up with the provision of necessary developmental infrastructures and social amenities has led to interventions at both states and local government levels by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), some of which are either locally established with international assistance or are established by international agencies. NGO have been christened non-profit organization that are best placed for the tasks of fostering popular participation which include articulating the needs of the weak, working in remote areas, changing behaviour and attitude of the local officials, and nurturing the productive capacity of the most vulnerable groups such as disable or landless (Bhatnager and Williams, 1992). They further added that NGOs seek to represent the voices of the weak and help them organize in their communities to achieve a more powerful voice in making of decisions and allocating resources.

Action Aid Nigeria international is an NGOs based in Abuja with international affiliation. The organization has since its inception in Nigeria in 2000 been involved in developmental activities in about ten states across all the geopolitical zones of Nigeria including Nasarawa. Since there are many mushrooms NGOs in Nigeria that are not really involved in development but rather out there to serve the interest of people promoting them, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the developmental activities of Actionaid in Nasarawa in the last three years to see if they have really been able to facilitate development in areas such as education, health, sanitation, good water sources and improved in the quality of nutrition of the people where intervention have taken place. Results from this study will facilitate recommendations on how best NGOs can bring development to our poverty ridden rural areas.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection for this work was carried out in eight communities where intervention has been carried out by Actionaid in Nasarawa state. These communities are Ogba, Tako, Fade, Aridi Ajege, Rafin Kudi, Ladi Endehu, Neko and Azuba Bashayi. Data used for this work were from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected using structured questionnaires while secondary data were from books, seminars and development reports. Focus group discussion, observations and personal interviews were also explored during primary data collection. Information were collected on socioeconomic characteristics of members of these communities, their state of infrastructural development before intervention and presently, and specifically, we asked questions on number of meals they eat per day, health issues, water sources, sanitation and other social amenities they have in the past and now. We also asked them question about the sources of these development so as to be able to differentiate what was coming from Actionaid and what and what came from government. The method of the measurement of the situation before and after

intervention in their social life and infrastructure was used to assess whether there has been development or not. This is found to be better than comparing two communities

where there has been intervention and where there has been none since the period of intervention has not really been too long and consequently, the people are still aware of changes that have taken place without having to mixed thing up.

Data collected were analyzed with SPSS using simple statistical tools such as frequency table, percentages, graphs and pie charts to explore what the situations were before and after intervention by Actionaid. The results of the study are presented in the section below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the data collected and their discussion are presented below on sanitation as represented by the improvement that have taken place in the types of toilet they now use, changes in the types of water sources, where respondents delivered their last babies, respondents visits to postnatal care, availability of health facilities in these communities, number of meals the people are able to afford per day, and availability of educational facilities in these communities. The changes that have occurred in these communities over the periods of intervention of Actionaid is used here as a proxy for gauging whether or not there has been an improvement in the quality of live and whether or not this organization's activities have had positive impact in the lives of people of these communities.

Sanitation situation of respondents in these communities

Table 1 below shows the types of toilet facilities used by respondents in these communities before and after the developmental intervention of Actionaid of Nigeria. It was found that about 29% of people in these communities used pit latrine three years ago as against 71% now. The increment in the number of people using pit latrine is an indication that these people have imbibed better hygiene habit and it is expected that flies transmitted diseases will continue to decrease among the people of these communities. This improvement in sanitation is due largely to awareness campaign on sanitation by Actionaid and the campaign has brought about an improvement in attitudinal change that has consequently improved the hygiene of the people of these communities.

One can also see from the Table that the number of people using bush to pass their excrete have decreased from 76% three years ago to about 24% now. It is hoped that with time, the remaining people will also join in using pit latrine so as to safe streams in the areas from pollution and consequently encouraging better and healthy living in the area. It is well known that contaminated streams water used for domestic purposes is the major cause of diarrhea and typhoid in the rural communities of Nigeria.

Table 1: Types of toilets used by respondents

| Toilets | 3 years back | Now | Total |
|------------------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| Pit latrine | 5 (29.4%) | 12 (70.6%) | 17 (100%) |
| Bush | 54 (76.1%) | 17 (23.9) | 71 (100%) |
| Pit latrine/Bush | - | 9 (100%) | 9 (100%) |

Water sources for communities members

Figure 1 and 2 below show that three years after intervention, 42% of the poor people of these communities still fetches water from the stream compared with 39% before intervention. However, 40% now use well water as against 20% before intervention. This is a very great improvement since well water is considered safer than stream water if properly protected and secured. We could also see that the number of respondents using stream and well have reduced from 20% before intervention to about 13% presently. The implication is that the enlightenment carried out by Actionaid on the need to ensure good sources for domestic water as a mean of preventing water born diseases is beginning to yield fruitful result. Finally, the result in figure 2 also shows that some of these people are beginning to use borehole water now. This is a very innovative approach at eradicating water born diseases in these communities if properly harnessed as a source of domestic water supply particularly source of drinking water. With better source for domestic water supply, these communities would soon be freed from water born related diseases like typhoid and diarrhea.

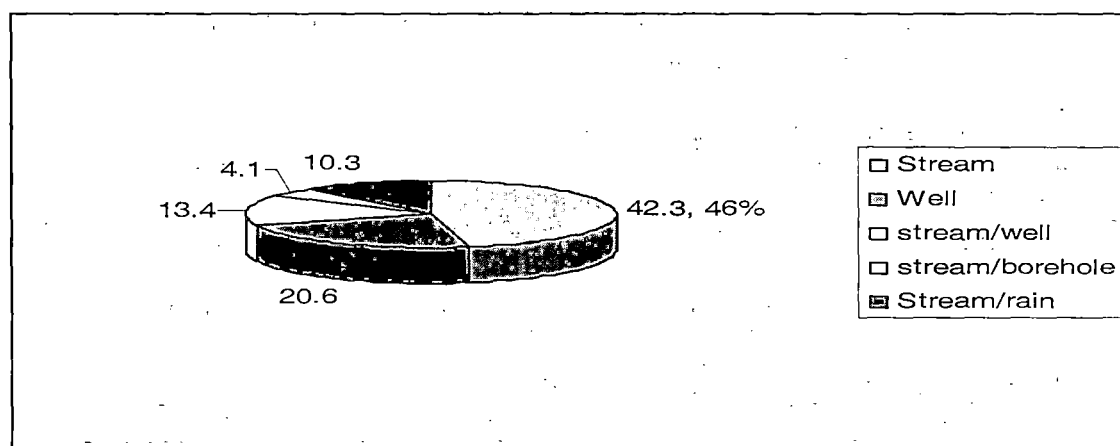


Figure 1: Water sources of respondents in studied communities three years ago

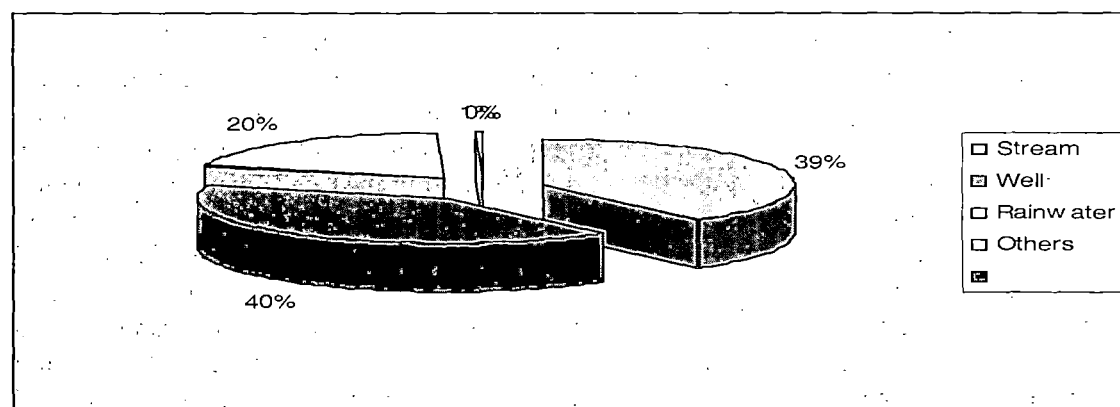


Figure 2: Water sources of respondents in studied communities now Where respondents delivered last baby

As shown in Table 2, there is a significant decrease from 82 to about 18% the number of women that delivered at home without any form of support, while the number of those who deliver in hospitals also increased by 20%. The result also revealed that some women still rely on traditional birth attendant during delivery. Overall access to health facilities and support to women during child delivery has improved. Table 3 also shows that the number of women visiting postnatal care has increased from about 13% three years ago to about 88% now. This is very significant for the postnatal care of the mothers and their babies and definitely a way of reducing mother and child mortality.

During the appraisals conducted in 2002 community, women said they have to trek over 3 kilometers to reach the nearest health centers either in Lafiya town or in Azuba bashayi one of the near by towns in the area. Now, over five health centers have been constructed and equipped by the project implemented by Actionaid in collaboration with members of these communities and presently, we have 21 Government paid staff posted to work in these health centres by the Local Government Authority. As at the time of this research, even though there is no single medical doctor posted to these clinics, we already has staff are staff nurses manning these clinics providing health care delivery to the people of these communities.

Table 2: Where respondents delivered last baby

| Where baby delivered | 3 years back | Now | Total |
|----------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| Hospital/clinic | 8 (40%) | 12 (60%) | 20 (100%) |
| TBA | 4 (50%) | 4 (50%) | 8 (100%) |
| Self/home | 14 (82.4%) | 3 (17.6%) | 17 (100%) |

Table 3: Whether respondents visit postnatal care

| Postnatal care visit | 3 years back | Now | Total |
|----------------------|--------------|-----------|----------|
| Yes | 1 (12.5%) | 7 (87.5%) | 8 (100%) |
| No | 1 (25%) | 3 (75%) | 3 (100%) |

Possession of household materials by respondents in the study communities

The figure 3 presents the household items possessed by people of these communities. It was found that only very few of these people possessed kerosene stove and by implication majority therefore uses firewood for cooking. This has serious implication for environment since trees would be cut down resulting in desertification, destruction of habitat and consequently environmental disaster. The destruction of land resulting from this would have serious implication as it will negatively affect soil fertility and consequently agricultural production. It was also found that over 60% have radio and consequently they have access to information about government programmes and activities. While about 40% have bicycle, only about 30% have motorcycle. It could therefore be said that majority of the people have means of transporting themselves and their farm produce to the markets in the area. It was also found that about 90% of the people claimed they have mattresses and mats leaving about 10% with nothing to lay on the floor to sleep on. It was however found that only very few people in these communities have telephone, fan and television. This is an indication that poverty is still very prevalent among these people. This shows that a lot more needs to be done to

bring these people out of poverty and this is a very great challenge to governments at all levels to really do something to improve the condition of these farming communities.

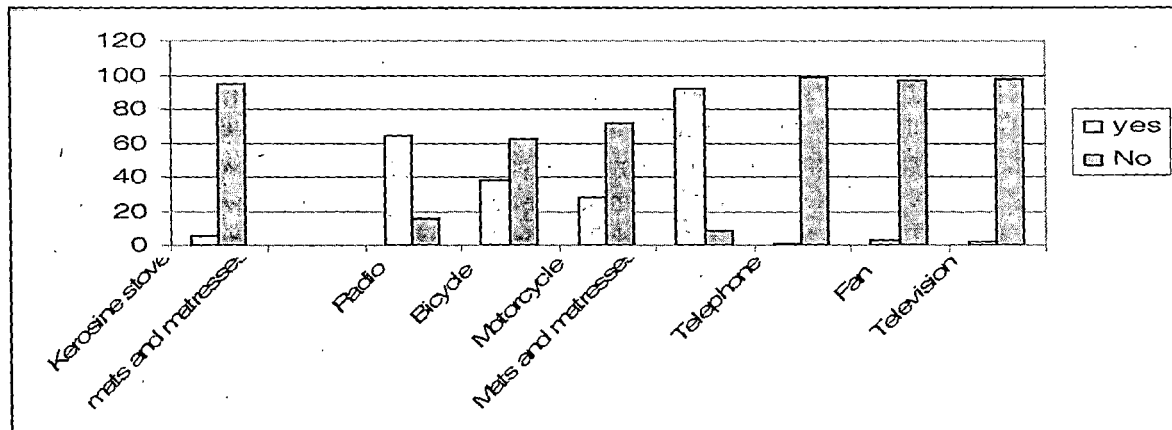


Figure 3: Showing household items possessed by respondents

Number of meals taken by respondents per day

The number of meals consumed per day could be used as a measure of the standard of living an individual have attained. It was consequently one of the criteria used in this study as a measure of whether the condition of these people is better now than it was three years ago. From Table 4, it was found that about 83% of the people that responded to this question claimed they could eat only one meal three years ago while presently we have about 61% of the respondents saying they can afford two meals per day now as against 39% three years ago. Furthermore, we have about 93% saying they could afford three meals now as against just 7% who claimed they could afford three meals three years ago. This is a clear improvement in the life of people of these area compared with what it was before Actionaid intervention in the area. It is a fact that this singular improvement might not be due to Actionaid effort alone, however, the capacity building effort of this organization and their enlightenment campaign have contributed in no small measure in making the people to wake up and become conscious of carrying out activities that would help them generate incomes to better the lot of their families.

Table 4: Number of meals taken by respondents per day

| Meals number/day | 3 years back | Now | Total |
|------------------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| One meal | 5 (83.3%) | 1 (16.7%) | 6 (100%) |
| Two meal | 25 (39.1%) | 39 (60.9%) | 64 (100%) |
| Three meals | 2 (7.4%) | 25 (92.6%) | 27 (100%) |

Availability of educational institutions in these communities

Prior to Actionaid intervention, there were no primary schools in these communities. However, presently, primary schools have been built by the

collaborative effort of Actionaid and the community development effort. This has equally forced government to provide teachers that are working in these schools. With the presence of schools in these communities, children that were unable to trek long

distances to attend school before now have schools available in their backyard and they now are able to attend school thus making education to be easily accessible to children in these communities.

The provision of furniture in these schools as opposed to some of the existing public schools makes them to be model schools and thus making these schools to be attractive. Clean well water and toilet facility were also provided in these school funded by Actionaid and community development effort thus enhancing cleanliness of the pupils in these schools. This is bound to make children passing through these schools to imbibe the culture of cleanliness thus helping to build a better society. The picture below is a sample of one of the schools facilitated by Actionaid and the community.

Some of the few intervention developmental projects executed in the area

Table five shows the summary of some of the few developmental intervention facilitated by Actionaid to these communities. From the table, it could be seen that six communities were provided with primary schools while four benefited from health centres construction and four were motivated to build four secondary/UBE primary school. These projects were executed with the provision of financial and material resources by Actionaid while the communities' members provided labour in form of communal efforts towards the project. The participation of communities' member is very significant as it afforded them the opportunity to have a sense of belonging and to lay claim to the project as their own property and consequently, they will be always ready to own and protect these projects. With such posture of community ownership, such projects will never be allowed to suffer the usual maintenance neglect and deterioration.

Another significant point about these projects is the large number of government paid staff employed by government to man and provide services to people of these communities. In a way, the project could be seen as a way of alleviating poverty since people employed to work in these schools and clinic would have been jobless if not for the presence of these projects in those communities. Thus, we could see that apart from the unspecified number of people employed to work in the UBE/Secondary schools in the area, we have 58 members of these communities employed in primaries schools and clinics in these areas. It is also significant that children, youth and women are the major beneficiary of these projects since they are the most vulnerable members of the rural farming communities.

Table 5: Summary of community health and education projects accessing Government and other stakeholders support in the sampled communities

| Type of project | Location | No of Government paid staff | Target |
|--|---------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Primary school | Ogba | 3 | Children from within and neighboring communities |
| | Tako | 3 | |
| | Fade | 2 | |
| | Aridi Ajege | 11 | |
| | Rafin Kudi | 12 | |
| | Ladi Endehu | 5 | |
| Clinic | Neko | 11 | Children and women |
| | Azuba Bashayi | 7 | |
| | Angwan Isa | 1 | |
| | Tako | 3 | |
| Secondary (UBE primary school premises used | | 4 (funded by the communities so far | Four communities |

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Actionaid like many other NGOs have been working in many Nigerian communities particularly in the rural areas to alleviate the socioeconomic conditions of the less privileged. This study revealed that Actionaid has made a lot of contributions at improving the life of rural communities in Nasarawa State. It shows that improvement have been recorded in their life in terms of sanitation awareness as more people now used pit latrine as opposed to open bush system, use of boreholes water as opposed to contaminated streams water, more women now deliver their babies in hospital rather than self delivery at home, attendance to postnatal care as opposed to the reverse in the past. There are now primary schools and health facilities in these communities and these were facilitated through the effort of Actionaid as opposed to non presence of these facilities in the past.

Finally, the provision of these amenities jointly by Actionaid and communities have attracted government attention to these communities as the government now provides paid staff, most of them communities members that are providing services in schools and health centers. Thus, it has helped in a way to provide employment for communities' members that would have been jobless. These communities development approach employed by Actionaid in partnership with communities' members has thus helped in poverty alleviation. It is also hoped that more efforts by various NGOs and government would facilitate rapid rural areas development that would help in promoting good succession in agricultural development since young people would be ready to stay in such developed rural areas and consequently embrace agriculture as a profession.

It is suggested that both government and all NGOs should be periodically submit their activities to evaluation to enable them gauge if their developmental activities are impacting on the people they claim to be serving. It is only through this that

we can know whether development efforts and projects being executed have bearing in addressing poverty reduction

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