



Research Paper

Assessment of Farmers Participation in Poverty Alleviation Programme In Imo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Farmer's participation in poverty alleviation programme in Imo State was assessed. To reduce poverty, more effort has to be made, incidentally, empirical studies on farmers participation in poverty alleviation studies is relatively scanty. Therefore, it becomes pertinent that the study assessed farmer's participation in poverty alleviation programme in Imo State. The objectives of the study was to identify the level of education of the farmers, to identify the poverty alleviation programmes available in the area, identify the farmers stage of participation in the programme, examine the extent of farmers participation in the programme, identify channels through which they participated and the perceived attitude of farmers towards poverty alleviation programme in the area. Primary source was used to collect data using structured questionnaire and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ordinary least regression model. Result shows that the farmers are literate and they participated in poverty alleviation programme but mostly at the implementation, evaluation and conclusion stage but none at the planning or formulation stage. In conclusion, farmers perceived the programme to be good. The study therefore recommends that the government should involve farmers through farmer-groups clusters in the formulation, introduction, implementation, evaluation and conclusion of poverty alleviation programme that have to do with them.

KEYWORDS: Farmers, Participation, Poverty, Alleviation

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I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his/her basic need of food, clothing and shelter, unable to meet social and economic obligations, lack of gainful employment skills, asset and self-esteem and has limited access to social, economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water and sanitation and as a result has limited chances of advancing his or her welfare to the limit of his/her capabilities. Poor people can also be found in both rural and urban areas though the incidence of poverty is much higher in the rural areas than in the urban areas. Rural poverty is common among small scale farmers and self-employed artisan and petty traders (Oye, 2010).

Successive Nigerian Governments have established one form of poverty alleviation programme or the other and they claimed the purpose is to fight poverty in Nigeria. Despite all these efforts, poverty is still starring many Nigerians in the eyes till today. The very first program established with a view to fight poverty was Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). This program was started by General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1979. (Nwaiwu, 2016)

Focus of the program was to improve food production, since the government believed that increase in food will lead to availability of cheap foods, which will then alleviate poverty and also improve on Nutrition. The program however ended when Shehu Shagari became President in 1979. Instead of continuing with the poverty alleviation program of the OFN, Shehu Shagari decided to establish his own. He came up with a program tagged the Green Revolution and the program equally placed emphasis on increased food production. (Nwaiwu, 2016) The lack of continuity of the said program however stalled its efforts to effect change in the lives of Nigerians, as it was halted in 1983 after General Muhammadu Buhari became Military President.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes are faced with many difficulties which seemed to make the programme ineffective due to non-participation of farmers in the programme. This little or low participation has significantly resulted in unawareness to new technologies and innovation such as improved Agrochemical, wrong land preparation and poor Access to bank loan etc (Oni,2009). Through farmers group like commodity groups, cooperative association, produce market association, farmer's participations can be achieved.

When farmers participate in programmes, they tend to adopt it but when they do not participate, the programmes are short lived such as the community farm programme (i.e the ikuala nkwu) programme mounted by the Imo State ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources are few examples of poverty alleviation programme implemented in the study area without the participation of the farmers, thus when farmers are not involved or poorly involved in poverty alleviation programmes, they become unfavorably disposed towards it and such programmes are tagged as Government's creation. Any attempt at addressing the issues of farmers in Imo State =must necessarily concentrate on effort to make simple technologies available and stimulate adoption of such technologies among our peasant farmers who remain the main driver in Agricultural production. Mass production and affordability of such simple and adoptable technologies will go a long way in addressing the issue (Nwosu *et al.*, 2015).

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study was conducted in Imo State which is among the five states in South-East Nigeria. The state is located between latitudes $5^{\circ} 10^1$ and $5^{\circ} 51^1$ North and longitude $6^{\circ} 35^1$ and $7^{\circ} 28^1$ East with a total land mass area of 5,289.49 km² and a total population of 3,934,899 persons (NBS, 2007) with many subsisting in farming. The state has an average annual temperature of 48^oc, an average annual relative humidity of 80%, average annual rainfall of 1800-2500 mm and an altitude of about 100m above sea level (Imo ADP, 1990). The State has agricultural zones namely Orlu, Owerri and Okigwe. It is also delineated into 27 Local Government Areas. The population of the study comprise of all crop farmers in Imo State. Two Local Government Area were randomly chosen from the 3 agricultural zones. From the selected Local Government Areas, 2 communities were selected randomly making it a total of 6 communities sampled for the study. One village was then randomly selected from each of the communities to give a total of 6 villages sampled. The list of contact food crop farmers which formed the sampling frame for the survey was obtained from the agricultural development programme (ADP) office in the State. From the list, 10 practicing food crop farmers were sampled from each village sampled to give a total sample size of 60 food crop farmers for the study.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Also ordinary least square regression and likert type scale rating was used to elicit response from the farmers.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Educational Level of Farmers

Table 1 shows that all the respondents had formal education. Majority of the farmers [61.7%] had completed secondary school qualification, portraying them as literate farmers who according to Ani (2007) and Bekabiland Bedemo (2015) are expected to show interest and willingness to involve in Agricultural Development Programmes.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes Available in the Area.

Results in Table 2 shows the distribution of farmers by poverty alleviation programmes available in the area. The result showed that majority (83.3%) of farmers identified Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) as part of the poverty alleviation programmes available in the area. This was followed by River Basin Development Authority (RBDA) and N-Power Scheme. Others include Women in Agriculture (WIA), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT). This result corroborates the several findings on poverty alleviation programmes in Imo State, such as studies by Umeh *et al* (2015), Oduyoye, et al (2013), Odebode (2008) and Oyemomi (2003).

Farmers Stage of Participation in Poverty Alleviation Programme

The result in Table 3 indicates that farmers were not actually carried along in formulation, introduction and implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. Using a discriminating index of 3.0 on a 5 point likert scale, the result shows that all the poverty alleviation programmes exhibited in the study area had less than 3.0 and hence were rejected by the farmers as having taken active participation except ADP and Women in Agriculture (WIA) which was accepted. This is line with the opinion of Onyibe, 2001 who opined that the government recognized through the ADP the importance of women in agriculture especially in food production and involved them in the establishment of Women in Agriculture (WIA) unit. Also statement of Krysik and

Finn, 2007 which says for effective implementation of programmes concerning farmers, farmers must be consulted and carried along in decisions that affect them.

Channels of Participation

Table 4 is the distribution of respondents by sources of information and participation in poverty alleviation programmes. From the result, Radio and personal meeting constituted the major channel of information for farmers participation in poverty alleviation programmes, followed by Leaflets, Newspaper, Journal. This result aligned with the findings of Aina (2006) which found Radio as effective channels of disseminating Agricultural programme related information. Okoroma *et al.*, (2015) found Radio programmes as a channel of stimulating farmers to reach out and seek for information on programmes. Further on the result, Arokoyo (2011) asserted that advancement in the use of information communication technologies is increasing the use of mass media like Internet/Online and Newspapers. This is because ICTs provide cheaper and efficient sources of information to the farmers.

Extent of Farmers Participation in Poverty Alleviation Programme

The result in Table 5 shows that there was a very high participation in the ADP and WIA programmes based on the fact that they produce an average mean above the discriminating index of 2.5 while Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), River Basin Development Authority (RBDA), N-Power scheme and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agencies of Nigeria (SMEDAN) which had an average mean below 2.5 and hence had low participation. This result corroborates the study by Ajayi (2011) which noted that farmers are much likely to participate in programmes if they are aware and are involved in the process of determining the objectives. This clearly indicates that awareness leads to farmer's participation and more so adoption of such programmes.

Perceived attitudes of farmers on Poverty Alleviation Programme

The result in Table 6 shows that farmers perceived all the programmes to be very good except for Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) which has 1.6 which is below the discriminating index of 2.0 and above. This is a good indication that if given the opportunity to participate in the programmes, it will have positive effects in their livelihood and standard of living. This is in line with the study of Umeh (2017) who noted that farmer's participation in poverty alleviation have been beneficial to their livelihood.

IV. CONCLUSION

The results indicated that farmers were involved in poverty alleviation programme mostly during implementation and evaluation stage and not formulation and introductory stage and that farmers in the study area are literate, hence, their education level would not have been a barrier. The study recommends that the government should involve farmers through farmer-group clusters like cooperatives, commodity associations, social and religious organizations in planning/formulation of poverty alleviation programme of every state based on their peculiarities.

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Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level.

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	2	3.3
Secondary	37	61.7
Tertiary	21	35.1
No formal Education	0	0
Total	60	100

Source: Own computation from Field Survey data 2019

Table 2: Distribution of Farmers by Awareness of Poverty Alleviation Programmes

Poverty Alleviation Programmes	Frequency	Percentage
Agricultural Development Programme (ADP)	50	83.3
River Basin Development Authority (RBDA)	40	66.7
N-Power Scheme	38	63.3
Women In Agriculture (WIA)	35	58.3
Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria SMEDAN)	29	48.3
Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT)	32	53.3

Source: Own computation from Field Survey data 2019 *Multiple responses recorded

Table 3: Distribution of farmers based on stage of participation on poverty alleviation programme
D1=3.0

Programmes	Planning or formulation stage	Introduction stage	Implementation stage	Evaluation stage	Conclusion Stage	Mean	Remark
Agricultural Development Programme (ADP)		6	50	4		3.0	Accepted
River Basin Development Authority (RBDA)		2	28	10	20	2.2	Rejected
N-Power Scheme		10	10	20	20	2.1	Rejected
Women In Agriculture (WIA)		20	30	8	2	3.1	Accepted
Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN)		2	8	40	10	2.0	Rejected
Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT)			20	12	28	1.8	Rejected
Community Farm Programme (Ikuala nkwu)		2	20	18	20	2.0	Rejected

Source: Own computation from Field Survey data 2019

Table 4: Distribution of farmers by channels used to enable farmers participate in poverty alleviation programmes.

Channel of participation	Frequency	Percentage
Television	10	16.6
Radio	50	83.3
Newspaper	23	38.3
Journal	13	21.7
Leaflet	27	45.0
Personal Meeting	50	83.3

Source: Own computation from Field Survey data 2019 *Multiple responses recorded

Table 5: Distribution by extent of farmer's participation in poverty alleviation programmes
DI=2.5

Programmes	Very High Participation	High Participation	Moderate Participation	Low Participation	Mean	Remark
Agricultural Development Programme (ADP)	32	24	3	1	3.45	Accepted
River Basin Development Authority (RBDA)	3	28	7	22	2.20	Rejected
N-Power Scheme	1	4	30	25	1.66	Rejected
Women In Agriculture (WIA)	18	10	20	12	2.56	Accepted
Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN)	2	5	28	25	1.73	Rejected
Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT)	25	23	8	4	3.15	Accepted

Source: Own computation from Field Survey data 2019

Table 6: Distribution of farmers by perceived attitude on poverty alleviation programmes.
DI=2.0

Poverty alleviation programmes	Very good	Good	Fair	Mean
Agricultural development programme (ADP)	35	20	5	2.5
River Basin Development Authority (RBDA)	34	23	3	2.5
N-Power Scheme	36	22	2	2.6
Women In Agriculture (WIA)	35	21	4	2.5
Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN)	38	20	2	2.6
Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT)	10	20	30	1.6

Source: Own computation from Field Survey data 2019.