
WOMEN PERCEPTION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES OF UNDP IN AKOKO NORTH LGA, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract: *The study examined rural development programmes of UNDP among women in Akoko North East LGA, Ondo State. Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and Interview schedule were employed to gather data from respondents. Random sampling was used to select eighty respondents. The data received were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that majority (62.5%) of the respondents were aware of rural development programme of UNDP. The study further showed that poor rural infrastructures (45%), rural electrification, inconsistency in redeeming pledges by donor agency and elite/political interference were factors hindering the programme from achieving its objective of alleviating poverty in the rural communities. Chi-square analysis shows that there was divergent perception of benefit among the beneficiaries. The study therefore recommended among others strict adherence to promise, and avoidance of involvement of rural elite in rural development programme since they are capable of diverting deliverables thereby entrenching poverty among the vulnerable ones.*

Keywords: UNDP, Women, Rural communities, Poverty reduction, Schemes

INTRODUCTION

Development is a social process by which any group of people or society harness, mobilizes and utilizes all resources available to it, human and material, for the purpose of transforming their socio-physical environment for the better and ultimately improving the quality of life of its members through increased production of their needs and equitable distribution of such needs. When development is targeted at, and involves the rural people, we then talk about it as rural development. Rural development is defined as a general improvement in the life of rural inhabitant namely their income, health, and their intellect or capacity to sustain the improved living conditions (Agbonifo, 1997). It is no gain saying that many programmes have been embarked upon by Nigerian government to reduce rural poverty without success. This includes Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW), Family Support Programme (FSP), Family Economic and Advancement Programme (FEAP). Some of the reasons for their failure included faulty backgrounds coupled with corruption, elite or political interference, and failure to redeem pledges etc. Thus poverty remains the tag of identification for the rural populace, but women are more inclined to the incidence of poverty than men due to different constraints ranging from

socio-cultural through economic to psychological. For instance, research result indicate that women are likely to utilize personal savings and resources for family sustenance, unlike men, who typically utilize about 25percent of such earnings on goods for personal consumption (Akpabio ,2005). Women contribute half of the world's population and about 565million of them reside in rural areas. They have contributed both to rural and national development in Nigeria and in the sub –region of Africa. In Gambia, men grow 94% of millet, maize and sorghum and own 77% of the cattle, while women grow 95% of rice and own 72% of the goats and poultry (CTA, 1999).

Kabeen (1994) opined that women are the backbone of the agricultural sector accounting for 70% of agricultural labour and responsible for 60% of agricultural production and 80% of food production. In Nigeria studies have shown that rural women farmers do perform about 70% or more of all agricultural production activities, 100% of food processing and utilization activities, and over 50% of storage and marketing operations. Invariably, women in rural Nigeria are constrained, alienated, marginalized, exploited economically and subsequently remain chronically poor (Sadauki,1992). However, United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) as one of the United Nations (UN) anti-poverty agencies has among its programmes job creation, increasing literacy rates and ensuring women's right. Accordingly, between 2001-2004 UNDP initiated programmes for empowering women in the rural areas of Ondo state. Some of the impacted communities include Akunnu, Ikakunmo, Ikun, Ugbe and Oba all in Akoko North LGAs. The scheme no doubt brought hope and aspiration to the target audience at its inception but the programme was short-lived thereby generated ripples and insinuations across the impacted communities. These grapevines led to different schools of thought; while some belief that the programme was intended to benefit certain group, others were of the opinion that it is capable of satisfying the needs of all beneficiaries without class or status distinction. Thus, this paper attempts to find out women perception and experience during the period the programme lasted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perception is the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world (Lindsay & Norman, 1977). In other words, a person is confronted with a situation or stimuli. The person interprets the stimuli into something meaningful to him or her based on prior experiences. However, what an individual interprets or perceives may be substantially different from reality. The perception process follows four stages: stimulation, registration, organization, and interpretation. A person's awareness and acceptance of the stimuli play an important role in the perception process. Receptiveness to the stimuli is highly selective and may be limited by a person's existing beliefs, attitude, motivation, and personality (Assael, 1995). Individuals will select the stimuli that satisfy their immediate needs (perceptual vigilance) and may disregard stimuli that may cause psychological anxiety (perceptual defense). Perceptual vigilance is responsible for divergence in the way people of different social status perceive the same thing. This study will therefore be underpinned on Broadbent's Filter theory. Broadbent (1958) addressed the concept of perceptual vigilance with his filter model. Broadbent argued that, on the one hand, due to limited capacity, a person must

process information selectively and, therefore, when presented with information from two different channels (i.e., methods of delivery such as visual and auditory), an individual's perceptual system processes only that which it believes to be most relevant. Thus, in a situation where individual is faced with deluge of constraints like economic, cultural, financial, political etc there is likely to be variations in the women's perception of UNDP development programmes. However, perceptual defense creates an internal barrier that limits the external stimuli passing through the perception process when it is not congruent with the person's current beliefs, attitudes, motivation, etc. This is referred to as selective perception. *Selective perception* occurs when an individual limits the processing of external stimuli by selectively interpreting what he or she sees based on beliefs, experience, or attitudes (Sherif & Cantril, 1945). Mertz et al (2009), by using focus group interviews and a household survey to analyze the perceptions of climate change and the strategies for coping and adaptation by sedentary farmers in the savannah zone of central Senegal concluded that, communities studied have high awareness of climate issues but climatic narratives are likely to influence responses. Human perception depends not only on individual personality but also on community, environment and interaction among these components. For example, *Sarkar et. al. (2010)* measured the risk perception of people about climate change and reported that 70 percent people perceived increase in crop diseases followed by reduction in agricultural production (46.7%), increase in salinity (40%), increase in insect and pest attacks (20%). Babasanya et al (2013) assessed farmers' perception of new cultivars of cassava in Igabi local government area, Kaduna State, Nigeria and asserted that for ease of adoption of new cultivars, there must be similarity between the farmer's local method and recommended practice for cultivating the new variety. This finding corroborates the work of Ekpe and Obeten (2002) and others which reveal many socio-economic factors that can hinder perception. Such works include those of Onu and Madueke, (2002) and Christenson (1976).

OBJECTIVES

1. to ascertain the awareness level of the programme in the area;
2. to identify the factors that have impeded the flow of expected deliverables;
3. to highlight the extent of benefit derived by communities.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Akoko North Local Government area, Ondo state in 2005. The area is located between longitude $5^{\circ} 30^1$ and $5^{\circ} 50^1$ and latitude $7^{\circ} 0^1$ and $7^{\circ} 30^1$, E with a population of 137, 300 people (Encarta, 2005). Women account for about two third of the total population. Majority of the women are formers with one form of the petty trading or the other. Purposive sampling was used to select five villages out of fifteen because of high concentration of UNDP projects in these areas. Two households and eight respondents each were randomly selected totaling eighty (80). The study was based on primary data which were collected through focused group discussion (Kumar, 1987; Mertz et al, 2009) and structured interview schedule. Mertz et al, (2009) by using focus group interviews and a household survey, to analyze the perceptions of climate change and the strategies for coping and adaptation by sedentary farmers in the savannah zone of central Senegal and concluded that communities studied have high awareness of climate issues but climatic narratives are likely to influence responses. The schedule contained information on the types of UNDP programmes in the area, specific benefits and need

satisfaction of the programmes, extent of involvement of the beneficiaries, the socio economic parameters and factors affecting the flow of expected deliverables. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics like chi-square. The hypothesis that there is no relationship between need satisfaction as perceived by respondents and their status was tested.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

An assessment of the awareness and benefits derived from derived from the programme was carried out and the result was commendable (table 4). From table 4, it can be seen that 62.5% of the respondents have knowledge of UNDP programme and have participated in it. The result is contrary to the findings of Onyenechere (2010) and Iro's (2008) studies. According to them many respondents were not aware of rural development schemes in the area. Further, in all the communities sampled, only Ikakunmo was provided with a health centre well equipped but without a health officer. This scenario maybe connected with lack of or poor rural infrastructure like electricity, good road network, portable water etc in the area. A community leader explained that in addition to the above reasons, inability of the donor agency to redeem pledges was a serious contributing factor for imminent truncation and demise of the programme in the area. Thus, a vast majority still have not had their poverty alleviated (Okeke, 2008). Other factors hindering the UNDP programme makes table 5 relevant.

Unexpected truncation of the programme notwithstanding, participant clearly expressed their need satisfaction and full involvement / participation (MAMSER, 1991) in all stages of the programme as shown in table 2. In table 3, it was revealed that participant were involved in all stages of the programme, from conception to implementation. This result is at variance with many innovations-adoption programmes across the country where lack of intensive use of face to face and follow –up by field extension agent (Van den Ben and Hawkins, 1983) has been the bane of adoption in Nigeria. In the case of UNDP there was full participation of their agents with the rural woman. Perhaps this may be the main reason that irrespective of difference in respondents' social status, their needs were met -cognitive and psychomotor. However, social status differentiate respondents significantly in terms of their perception of need satisfaction of the scheme, and it is consequent upon chi-square result that there was significant relationship between social statuses of respondents and need satisfaction (as contained in table 6). This result is similar to Flynn's (1994) study of risk perception among Americans where rich conservator men judged a variety of environmental risks to be lower than did most other Americans. Similarly Medugu (2009) concluded that impacts of climate change will affect people differently depending on their livelihood strategies and asset base. However, none of the respondents expressed affective need satisfaction maybe because they were still young (between 21-45years) with characteristic social propensity, faster reaction time and innovation proneness (Jibowo, 1996) and so do not require special training to be bold and easily take action without fear of the consequence.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper has examined UNDP rural development programmes in Akoko North LGA, Ondo state and avowed that intervention programmes meant to avert the spread of poverty among rural women is imbued with a lot of bottlenecks making it appear not sufficient in eradicating poverty. Much of the effort at reducing poverty is predicated upon the provision of an appropriate level infrastructure and credibility on the side of donor agencies. Therefore, those entrusted with responsibility of making rural population happy and peaceful must not toil with the resources at their disposal as the peace of the nation rest on the peace of the rural population. Some important lessons from this study include the failure in redeeming pledges made by the development agencies. Also paramount is that deliverables should be made available to people according to needs identification and in order in which desire for such needs are made without prejudice.

RECOMMENDATION

The findings from this study reveal that lack of rural infrastructure and insincerity in redeeming pledges were the main thrust against achieving the poverty reduction among women in the study area. Donor agencies should note that their credibility is at stake whenever they fail to fulfill their pledges. Government should partner with donor agencies and ensure adequate fund provision and close monitoring of the activities through selected responsive and responsible individuals in the community. Effort should be made the three tiers of government to provide rural infrastructure such as good road network, electricity, potable water that would facilitate deliverables. Also, the need to avoid the elite and political class is rife as it has become a norm to providing rural infrastructure limits effective rural community development.

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Table 1: Socio- economic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
AGE		
21-30	25	31.25
31-40	33	41.25
41-50	22	27.50
EDUCATION		
No School	10	12.5
Primary	40	50.0
Secondary	25	21.25
Tertiary	5	6.25
RELIGION		
Christianity	45	56.25
Islam	35	43.75
Total	80	100

Source: Field Survey, 2006

Table 2: Respondents' class and extent of needs satisfaction

Respondents	Highly Met	Moderately Met	Not Met at All	% Distribution	Total
Class					
Low	45	0	0	56.25	45
Middle	0	25	0	31.25	25
High	0	10	0	12.50	10
Total	45	35	0	100	80
Education					
High	0	8	0	10.00	8
Low	33	0	0	41.25	33
No Formal Edu.	39	0	0	48.75	37
Total	72	8	0	100.00	80

Source: Survey 2006.

Key Note**Class (Income)****Highly Met** = If ≥ 2 Psychological needs are met**Moderately Met** = If 1 Psychological need is met**Not Met** = None Psychological need is met

Table 3: Respondents' participation in the programme

Stage of participation	Frequency	Percentage %
Concept	38	47
-ionion	10	12.5
Formulation	32	40.0
Implementation		
Total	80	100

Source: Field Survey: 2006

Table 4: Level of awareness of UNDP programmes and specific benefits derived from it.

Communities in Akoko	Local Govt.Area	Schemes Present and benefited you and family	Schemes absent and has benefited You and family	Aware of UNDP prog.	Not aware of UNDP programme.
Ikun	Akoko South East	Borehole Blacksmith	Health center	12	4
Oba		Borehole	Health center	7	9
Ikakunmo	Akoko North- East	Credit scheme facilities, Agriculture,		16	2
Akunu		Health center Borehole Adult		11	5
Ugbe		Education, Borehole Credit facilities	Health center	6	10
Total				50 (62.5%)	30 (37.5%)

Source: Field Survey, 2006

Table 6: Result of Chi-square analysis (Dependent variable = Perception of need satisfaction with UNDP rural development programme).

Variable	X ²	df	Level of sig.	Decision
Need satisfaction and social status	65.4	1	0.05	Reject H ₀

Source: survey, 2006

Table 5: Factors perceived as hindering the effort of UNDP from achieving poverty reduction in an area.

Communities	LGA	Elite/Political interference	Bad Leadership	Inadequate cooperation	Failure to redeem pledges	Poor rural infra-structure
Ikun	Akoko S/East	0	0	0	9	7
Oba		3	0	0	8	5
Ikakunmo		1	0	0	5	10
Akunnu		2	0	0	6	8
Ugbe		4	2	4	0	6
Total		10	2	4	28	36
%		12.5	2.5	5.0	35	45