Challenges facing rural dwellers' participation in community-based agriculture and rural development project in Gombe state

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Abstract
Studies have affirmed the effectiveness of community based development project in helping rural dwellers improve their socio-economic status. However, both internal and external forces do pose challenges to beneficiaries' participation in any development project. Hence this study focused on the challenges facing rural dwellers' participation in community-based agriculture and rural development projects in Gombe state, Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was used to sample 71 respondents from 3 selected Rural Village Areas (RVAs). The results show that 36.6% of the respondents were between age 41 and 50, 31.0% between 31 and 40, and 11.3% below 31years (mean=43.7). Of all the respondents, female were 50.7%, 94.4% married and 78.9% educated. Majority of the respondents (69.0%) were farmers and 67.6% earned below mean income of ₦14,711.27. Only 3 of the 8 identified challenges had means above overall mean (Mean=1.13). No significant relationship existed between participation and sex (χ^2=0.014, $p < 0.05$), age ($r= 0.129$, $p < 0.284$). However, significant relationship existed between participation and marital status (χ^2=55.901, $p < 0.05$), education (χ^2=26.070, $p < 0.05$), source of income (χ^2=76.324, $p < 0.05$), household ($r= 0.370$, $p < 0.01$) and monthly income ($r= 0.129$, $p < 0.01$). There was no significant relationship between challenges faced and participation in community-based agriculture and rural development project activities ($r=0.068$, $p < 0.996$). In conclusion, the challenges were not yet serious on participation. However, issues of delayed implementation, unfulfilled promise and finance, with scores above means should be addressed by the development agencies as they can affect participation.

Keywords: Challenge, Participation, Rural dwellers, Community-based project

INTRODUCTION

Community-based development is a form of development that takes place within the community, emphasises maximum participation of community members in its design and implementation, is ongoing, meets real needs, and is basically self-reliant. It requires that the community have a structure, and persons trained in appropriate methods of implementation. Usually, community-based development is small-scale, low-cost, and uses simple technologies. According to IFAD (2007) the community based development projects help build capacity and strengthen institutions providing services to rural poor people, assisting with necessary policy changes, developing local organizations to enhance their effective participation, and promoting initiatives to foster rapid private sector-led poverty reduction and economic growth. For community-based development to occur people must adopt a new attitude, in which they become actors rather than recipients, and embrace small incremental change generated internally rather than expect large infusions of external wealth and technology. Hence community-based development encompasses forms of development as well as the structures needed to achieve them: it is biased in favour of participatory, community-controlled method such as that employed by African Development Bank Community Based Agriculture and Rural Development Project (AfDB-CBARDP).

Rural infrastructure plays a very significant role in enhancing agricultural production and produce marketing (Jacoby, 2000; Inoni, 2008; Munonye, 2008). For example, road network and marketing facilities accelerate efficient delivery of farm inputs, reduce transport cost, and enhance special agricultural production and distribution. Investment in rural infrastructure have resulted in phenomenal growth in agricultural production and productivity, while rapid growth in agricultural productivity has led to significant trickle down benefit for the rural poor in some countries like India (Binswanger *et. al*. 1993; Fan *et*. *al*., 2000).

Rural development is a conscious, deliberate and planned effort of the rural people and or the government to improve the economic, social, political and cultural conditions of the rural communities. According to Ekong (2003) rural development can be described as a process by which a set of technical, social, cultural and institutional measures are implemented with and for the inhabitants of rural areas with the aim of improving their socio-economic conditions in order to achieve harmony and balance both on the regional and national levels. The need for development in rural areas is one of the dominant issues of concern in today's world. The realisation that no meaningful national development programme would produce desired results at the expense of rural development has been the basis for implementation of one rural development or the other (Olatunji and Unamma, 2008). A viable rural development, however, can only be achieved when there is sustained growth in rural income and standard of living. Agricultural development is an important requirement for economic development of a society (Falusi, 1997). It enables farmers to increase their incomes,

investment, improve their standard of living and reduce poverty, as more funds become available for development projects like education, health, manufacturing, roads construction/rehabilitation, and communication. It helps to transform life of the people who constitute the society. One of the reasons attributed to the low growth of the Nigerian economy is the slow growth of the agricultural sector, which is characterised by rising food prices, more food import and inadequate raw materials (CBN, 1999).

Hence if community-based agriculture and rural development project is properly planned and executed with full participation of the beneficiaries, it will improve the rural dwellers' socio-economic status. Considering this need for active participation of beneficiaries, IFAD and AfDB through their community-based poverty reduction initiatives undertake projects of community development in collaboration with Nigeria Government. Among such rural community development projects of Africa Development Bank in Nigeria is the Community-Based Agriculture and Rural Development Project (CBARDP).

The term participation implies voluntary joint activities of people in those political, economic and social activities which affect their lives (Adisa and Jibowo, 2004). People's participation is a political process in which previously excluded class, or group seek to become involved, have a voice in and generally gain access to the benefits of economic and social development. According to Torimiro and Laogun (2000), participation in rural development activities is a way to empower rural dwellers and accommodate their view for policy formulation through cooperative efforts in rural development. One can viewed participation as the active process in which the person in question takes part in the initiation and implementation of decisions. It also includes cooperative financing of projects with the governments. Participation is an action of individuals that enables him/her to have input into the decision-making process and play significant roles in improving the quality of lives of his/her community people by taking part in the initiation and implementation of the decision(s) and cooperative funding of the project/programme.

However, many attempts at expected community participation failed because organisations promoting involvement are unclear about the level of participation on offer (Joseph Rowntree Foundation – JRF, 1994). Brown *et al* (2002) found that community driven development project that lacked external institutional, finance, and technical support were not sustainable. According to Hussain (2009) community members' differences and power relationships, the conflicts, and the diversity of interests determine day to day behaviour and have impact on the effectiveness of participatory approach. Similarly, Olumodeji *et al.* (2006) observed nine challenges facing people participating in community development which include finance, lack of cooperation among participants, lack of interest and poor communication to the participants. There is no doubt that these challenges can reduce effective participation; but if identified and addressed promptly they might be overcome successfully. Therefore, this study aimed at finding out the challenges facing rural dwellers participating in community-based agriculture and rural development projects in Gombe state.

The specific objectives were to:

i. determine the personal characteristics of the respondents
ii. identify the challenges of participation in community-based agriculture and rural development projects
iii. assess the respondent's level of participation in community-based agriculture and rural development projects

METHODOLOGY

Sampling and methods of data collection

The study was carried out using multistage sampling technique. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three of the nine participating Local Government Areas (LGAs). One Rural Village Area (RVA) was selected from each of the three RVAs in the three LGAs. Simple random technique was used to select 5% of the registered participants from the three RVAs; 35 from Kembu, 21 from Lamugu and 15 from Kwami RVA. In all 71 respondents were used for the study.

Structured interview schedule was used to collect quantitative data for the study. Enumerators, who understand the local languages very well, were trained to assist in administering the instruments on the target population. It was necessary to use enumerators, not only to hasten the work but to allow the respondents express themselves in their local languages.

Measurement of variables

Level of participation in the community-based development project: Respondents were asked to indicate their participation in 84 activities under three major components which were agricultural development, infrastructural development and capacity building components. They were to indicate the frequency of their participation whether always, occasionally or seldom. Scoring was done as follows: Always=3, Occasionally=2, and Seldom=1; Total score = 252. Means score was calculated to categorise the level of participation to low participation and high participation.

Challenges facing rural dwellers in AfDB-CBARDP: Respondents were asked to state the problem against their participation in AfDB-CBARDP

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics

Result on age in table 1 shows that 36.6% of the respondents were between 41 and 50, 31.0% between 31 and 40, and 11.3% below 31years (□=43.7years). The result reveals that majority of the respondents were within the mean age and below from where inference can be drawn that majority of the respondents were working class and matured. According to Obeta and Nwagbo (1999), younger farmers are more flexible to new ideas and risks; hence they are expected to embrace the community-based project introduced to them.

Female were more than male (50.7%) against (49.3%) as shown in table 1. It is not in all studies consisting of male and female that male is more in percentage. Adeogun and Oluyole (2004) discovered more female farmers than male in a technology adoption study. For this study, possibility of more female than male arose because female were encouraged more to participate in the project as the most venerable group that needs to be more empowered (Abdullahi, 2006).

The findings of this study reveal that 94.4% of the respondents were married while the remaining 5.6% were widow (table 1). The result corroborated Tologbose and Adekunle (2000) who observed that 98.5% were married among rural farmers in Benue. Marital status may become an important factor in agricultural production especially when farm labour supply is limited. Marital status is a social symbol which attracts prestige among rural dwellers.

Table 1 shows that 64.8% had household size of more than 7 persons, 28.2% 4 – 6 persons while 7.0% of the respondents had household size of 1 – 3 persons (□=9.93 ± 8.36). Based on the findings, it can be inferred that large family size was common in the study area, where most of the families were larger than 7 persons. The result is also in line with the 2006 population reports, which specify the average family size of greater than 8 persons for both Gombe state. Large family size is a valuable resource in rural communities because household members are good source of farm labour unlike in the urban areas where it is seen as a burden.

Appreciable number of the respondents (78.9%) acquired one form of education or the other (table 1). It can therefore, be inferred that majority of the respondents are literate. According to Hussain (2009), respondents' attained educational status is expected to influence positive growth and development of their society. Hence the respondents' attained educational status is expected to influence positive change in the community.

The major source of income of the respondents as shown in table 1 reveals that 69.0% of the respondents indicated farming as their major source of income. Other sources of income include trading (18.3%), civil service (8.5%) and Artisan (4.2%). The result is in line with the assertion of Falusi and Adeleye (2000) that agriculture engages about 75% of people in most developing nations.

Mean income of the respondents was ₦14,711.27 (table 1). Consequently, respondents with income less than mean were low income earners. The result shows that 67.6% of the respondents earned within and below mean income from all their income generating activities. This result is different from the observation of Imoh (2004) who reported that majority of the respondents were within the range of ₦1,000 and ₦3,999. The difference is possible because the value of Nigerian naira is less now compared to what was obtained in 2004.

Table 1: Respondent's personal characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Age years				
< 31	8	11.3		
31 – 40	22	31.0		
41 – 50	26	36.6	43.72	10.37
51 – 60	11	15.5		
61 and above	4	5.6		
Sex				
Male	35	49.3		
Female	36	50.7		
Marital status				
Married	67	94.4		
Widowed	4	5.6		
Household size (persons)				
1 – 3	5	7.0		
4 – 6	20	28.2	9.93	8.36
7 and above	46	64.8		
Attained education				
No education	15	21.1		
Primary education	36	50.7		
Secondary education	11	15.5		

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Tertiary education	9	12.7		
Primary source of income				
Farming	49	69		
Civil service	6	8.5		
Trading	13	18.3		
Artisan	3	4.2		
Monthly income (₦)				
< 7,500	20	28.2		
7,500-10000	11	15.5		
10,001-15000	17	23.9	14,711.27	9,602.70
15001-20000	8	11.3		
Above 20000	15	21.1		

Source: Field survey (2011)

Respondent's Farming information

The result of the respondents' farming experience presented in table 2 reveals that majority of the respondents (>53%) had been farming for at least 22 years (mean=22.06). The result corroborated the observation of Adeogun and Oluyole (2004); and Ndanitsa and Umar (2008) who reported in similar studies that majority of respondents were above 11 years in farming business. Since majority of the respondents were experienced farmers, it would be easy for them to detect any change brought into their business by the project. Hence their participation will be further enhanced.

Table 2 shows that majority (52.1%) had farm size of between 0.1 – 2 ha, 22.5 % 2.1 – 4 ha, 15.5% 4.1 – 6 ha, while 9.9% had above 6ha (=3.25 ± 3.55). It can be inferred from the result that majority of the respondents were small scale farmers. This result is different from what Tologbose and Adekunle (2000) observed that majority of the rural farmers in Benue had less than 1ha of farm land. The difference in observation is possible because the vegetation of the two studies are not similar as that of Gombe allows opening of large area of land for farming.

Table 2 shows that 60.6% of the respondent had high utilisation of information sources. To achieve both agriculture and rural development, there must be proper and efficient ways of exchanging and sharing information, skill and knowledge to and among rural dwellers. According to Agbontale *et al*. (2008) knowledge and information are important factors for accelerating agricultural development by increasing agricultural production and improving marketing and distribution.

Majority of the respondents (70.4%) had access to market as shown in table 2. Only 29.6% of the respondents had no access to market. This is an indication that there is no problem in disposal of farm produce in the study area. Marketing is very important when considering production, including agricultural production. It is the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producers to consumers or final user. In agricultural marketing, the point of production is the basic source of supply. The marketing process begins at that point and continues until a consumer buys the product at the retail counter or until it is purchased as a raw material for another production phase (Johnson, 1985). Hence, for economic development, it is important to raise farming output but equally important to develop marketing so that the extra production reaches consumers efficiently.

Table 2: Respondent's Farming information

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Farming experience (years)				
0	4	5.6		
1-10	6	8.5	22.06	10.59
11-20	28	39.4		
21-30	22	31.0		
31 and above	11	15.5		
Farm size (ha)				
0	4	5.6		
0.1-2	33	46.5	3.25	3.55
2.1-4	16	22.5		
4.1-6	11	15.5		
Above 6	7	9.9		
Information utilization				
Low (Below mean)	28	39.4		
High (Mean and above)	43	60.6	10.79	1.51

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Access to market				
Have access	50	70.4		
Have no access	21	29.6		

Source: Field survey (2011)

Respondents' level of participating in community-based development

Table 3 shows that 52.1% of the respondents participated in the community-based development activities at low level with the score below mean of 42.38. The result corroborated the observation of Adegboye *et al* (2009) who reported in similar studies that level of rural dwellers' participation in development project was low.

Table 3: Respondents' level of participating in community-based development

Participation levels	Frequency	Percentage
Low (12-42)	37	52.1
Average (43)	2	2.8
High (44-100)	32	45.1
Total	71	100.0

Mean=42.38
Source: Field survey (2011)

Challenges facing rural dwellers participating in community-based development

Challenges facing rural dwellers participating in community-based agriculture and rural development activities as identified by the respondents are shown in table 4 below. Eight challenges with mean score of 1.13 were identified. Only three of the challenges had means above the overall mean. These were delayed implementation (1.28), unfulfilled promise (1.15) and finance (1.35). It can be inferred from the result that the challenges identified by the respondents were not yet serious ones. Hence, the challenges are not expected to hinder the achievement of the project's goal unless allowed to become serious challenges.

Table 4: Challenges facing rural dwellers participating in community-based development

Challenges faced	Yes	No	Mean
Delayed implementation	20(28.2)*	51(71.8)*	1.28
Unfulfilled promise	11(15.5)	60(84.5)	1.15
Poor infrastructure	2(2.8)	69(97.2)	1.03
Finance	25(35.2)	46(64.8)	1.35
Insufficient items	8(11.3)	63(88.7)	1.11
Poor communication	3(4.2)	68(95.8)	1.04
Leadership problem	1(1.4)	70(98.6)	1.01
Lack of cooperation	2(2.8)	69(97.2)	1.03

*Percentage in parenthesis
Mean=1.13
Source: Field survey (2011)

Relationship between personal characteristics of rural dwellers and participation in community-based development project activities

Test of relationship between personal characteristics (sex, marital status, education, source of income, age, household size and monthly income) and participation of rural dwellers in the study area was determined by use of Chi-square (χ^2) and PPMC; the result is as showed in table 4 below.

The result show that sex of the respondents has no significant relationship with their participation (χ^2=0.014, $p < 0.05$). This is an indication that the participation of the male is not better than that of their female counterparts in the study. Hence as the male needs the community-based development project, the female also needs it towards improvement in their socio-economic status.

However, the result shows that marital status of the respondents contributed significantly to their participation (χ^2=55.901, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, the result shows that level of education of the respondents contributed significantly to their participation (χ^2=26.070, $p < 0.05$). This means that the level of education of the respondents related to participation. That is, the higher the educational attainment of a respondent, the higher his or her participation in the community-based agric and rural development project activities. Also, the result shows that respondent's source of income contributed significantly to their participation (χ^2=76.324, $p < 0.05$).

The result further indicates that respondent's age had no relationship with participation (r= 0.129, p < 0.284). However, relationship existed between respondents' household (r= 0.370, p < 0.01) and monthly income (r= 0.129, p < 0.01), and participation in community-based agriculture and rural development project activities.

Table 4: Relationship between personal characteristics of rural dwellers and participation in community-based development project activities

Variables	df	χ^2 Cal.	p-value	Decision
Sex	1	0.014^	0.906	Not significant
Marital status	1	55.901*	0.000	Significant
Education	3	26.070*	0.000	Significant
Major source of income	3	76.324*	0.000	Significant
Variables		**r -value**	**p –value**	**Decision**
Age		0.129^	0.284	Not significant
Household size		0.370**	0.001	Significant
Monthly income		0.393**	0.001	Significant

*Chi-square is significant at p<0.05
^ Chi-square is not significant at p<0.05
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Source: Field survey (2011)

Table 5: Relationship between challenges facing rural dwellers and participation in community-based development project activities

The result in table 5 shows that there is no significant relationship between challenges faced and participation in community-based agriculture and rural development project activities (r=0.068, p < 0.996). This implies that the challenges were not so serious to reduce participation. However, it does not mean that the challenges should be left unattended to until they are aggravated.

Variable	N	r-Value	p-Value	Decision
Challenges and participation in community-based development project	71	0.068	0.996	Not significant

Source: Field survey (2011)

CONCLUSION

Based on these findings, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents were working class and matured as the mean age was 43.7years, and majority of the respondents were within the mean age and below. Female were found to be participating more than the male. This is a positive development as are often the most venerable group that needs empowerment. Similarly, almost all the respondents were married. Based on the findings, it can be inferred that large family size was common in the study area. Majority of the respondents acquired one form of education or the other. Also, many of the respondents were farmers. Mean income was ₦14,711.27 and majority of the respondents earned within and below mean income from all their income generating activities. Majority of the respondents had been farming for at least 22 years, had farm size of between 0.1 – 2 ha and had high utilisation of information sources. Similarly, majority of the respondents had access to market which is an indication that there is no problem in disposal of farm produce in the study area.

Only three of the challenges, which were delayed implementation, unfulfilled promise and finance, had means above the overall mean. No relationship was discovered between sex and participation but relationship existed between marital status, education, source of income, household size and income, and participation in community-based agriculture and rural development project. Observation from the study also reveals that the challenge faced by respondents had no relationship with participation in community-based agriculture and rural development project activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the conclusion, the following are recommended:

(i) Financial support should be given to the rural dwellers towards their active participation in any development project as many of them were low income earners.
(ii) The three most important challenges identified by the respondents, delayed implementation, unfulfilled promise and finance, should be addressed by the development agencies as they can affect participation.
(iii) Marital status, education, source of income, household size and income should be well considered in planning subsequent

development projects since they were discovered to have relationship with participation.

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