

YOUTH AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH AGRIBUSINESS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN KANO STATE

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ABSTRACT

Youth and women constitute greater percentage of unemployed in many developing countries including Nigeria. This situation affects the socio-economic development of many countries. The issues of food security, drug addiction, security challenges and low purchasing power among others are attributed to youth and women unemployment in Nigeria. Agriculture continues to occupy a significant position on Africa's development landscape. Through agribusiness entrepreneurship considerable percentage of youth and women had been empowered and this led to inclusive growth, employment generation and sustainable livelihoods which contributed in improving agriculture and food security activities in the country. Kano State is the most populous State in Nigeria and faced with problem of youth and women unemployment. From various empowerment programmes by the State Government, 420 beneficiaries were selected for the study. Secondary data were obtained on the interventions made in youth and women entrepreneurial capacity building in the State. Qualitative data was also collected from the beneficiaries and analysed using descriptive statistics. It was found that the State had trained 9796 trainees of which 60% (5932) were female and 40% (3864) male, majority (70%) of whom are between 20 and 30 years of age. The study concluded that the establishment of skills acquisition centres to train youth and women in agribusiness led to wealth creation, poverty reduction and employment generation for sustainable livelihood.

Keywords: Youth and women empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Agribusiness, Sustainable livelihood

BACKGROUND

Collaboration between Governments and development partners in developing countries have in recent years focuses on economically empowering youth and women, to enable them contribute effectively to their personal and national development. This empowerment programme is nested within a broader macro policy concern of poverty reduction as a human rights issue, and also as a peace and security imperative. Unemployment among youth and women had become a major area of concern to many governments in developing countries like Nigeria, and this constitute two key demographic domains of poverty (youth and women). Doreo Patners (2013) put unemployment increase rate at 16% per annum, agricultural entrepreneurship through small agribusiness provide the major panacea to youth and women unemployment in Nigeria.

Odu *et al* (2014) examined that, Nigeria population is now about 140 million (NPC, 2006) out of which the young people below the age of 14 years constitute 48%. This added to 3.1% of the population who are 65 years and above, making a catastrophic 10.5%

dependence ratio in setting where the population is growing faster than the carrying capacity of the economy. Official figure shows that about 500,000 people join the labour market every year in Nigeria. Out of these, 50,000 people come from universities alone. However, a miserable 8,120 new jobs are created per year. Underdevelopment stands at a staggering 65% much of which is actually disguised by unemployment. At the current growth rate of 5.6% per annum (Cumin and Huglas, 2002), Nigeria's population is slated to hit 250 million in 2050. If this is not matched with rapid employment creation and supported by a labour force that is well prepared to compete for global employment opportunities, the country's demographic trend will precipitate a social and economic liability instead of functioning as a demographic bonus for sustainable development (NEEDS, 2005).

Nigerian government has made significant efforts to achieve international targets within the framework of MDGs as well as the national policy objectives towards harnessing the potential of women and youth as a very significant demographic group. In Nigeria, Agriculture provides the single most

important platform for expansion of employment, income generation and food security. Before the discovery of crude oil in 1958, agriculture was the main stay of the Nigerian economy providing greater percentage of employment to citizenry. Considerable percentage of Nigerians depends on agriculture as the main livelihood pillar. The sector holds an important key to poverty reduction through increased productivity, value addition, improved marketing and linkages to other sectors.

Kano State is known to be an agro-based State. The State Government has made giant strides in agriculture in line with its human development policy and poverty alleviation. Through agribusiness entrepreneurship, the government established skills acquisition centres, aimed at providing short term training for direct self-employment. In the last four years, the government successfully empowered large number of youth and women. But Kano state being the most populous state in Nigeria, a lot has to be done to cater for those that are still unemployed or underemployed. Kano with 27.6% unemployment rate as at 2009 (National Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey, 2009) with probability of annual increase of up to 16%, the skills acquisition training and empowerment had followed a strategic path of accelerated development that reduced unemployment thereby ensuring food security for sustainable livelihood.

There is decreasing interest among youth in entering agricultural related fields due to the persistent perception of agriculture as an outdated field with minimal financial returns. However there are new and alternative ways to engaging with agriculture that respond to the expectations of youth and women.

One of the major goals of universal declaration on development (2000-2015) that affects many developing countries in the world is reducing extreme poverty among youth and women. Careful study shows that many countries are yet to achieve this important goal among the eight millennium development goals. Places like Kano State that are densely populated are most affected by this problem of unemployment. Improvement in modern agribusiness, being the traditional and most common means of livelihood to many Kano people will provide a better empowerment

opportunities in that regard. In light of the above, the researcher having reviewed the previous studies on the subject matter will examine youth and women empowerment through agribusiness for sustainable livelihood in Kano State.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Describe the socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiaries of the empowerment programmes in Kano State
2. Evaluate the various interventions made by Kano state government to youth and women through agribusiness in the State.
3. Evaluate the impact of youth and women empowerment programmes through agribusiness in Kano State and
4. Propose ways of improving youth and women empowerment programmes through agribusiness in Kano State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Doss, *et al* (2012) examined women's economic empowerment in agriculture and attempted to identify successful 'women in agriculture' interventions and their common characteristics. The research contacted over 100 researchers and practitioners, identifying 34 projects to serve as the case studies. The study further interviewed people involved with each project to learn what types of interventions are working. The interventions fell into three types: those targeting food security; those looking to engage women in economic structures and agricultural markets; and those seeking to increase women's rights as a means of increasing economic power. The result reveals that using integrated approaches and targeting women as members of a larger household and community require implementers to clearly see women's multifaceted role in the agricultural supply chain and in rural society. Organizations working with women must see them as not just farmers, but buyers, sellers, community leaders, wives, mothers, processors, and innovators. Projects that targeted women in more than one of their roles proved the most effective. Ifenkwe (2012) conducted a study on mobilizing and empowering youths for sustainable community and rural development in Nigeria. The work discusses the conflicting characteristics of youths who are in the majority in Nigeria, and stresses the

need and ways to nurture (educate) and empower them to apply their skills and intellect for sustainable community and rural development in Nigeria.

Marselen (2015) wrote on empowering women in agriculture: Australia and beyond. The work reveals that, globally, women are not sufficiently recognized for their contributions to farming. Women play a key role in the global rural workforce, comprising nearly half of all agricultural workers. They contribute to on-farm work as managers, paid farm workers, unpaid domestic workers and also sustain rural communities through off-farm work and community participation.

Akpan (2010) conducted a research on encouraging youth's involvement in agricultural production and processing. The work explores issues related to youth involvement in agriculture such as socioeconomic characteristics of youth engaged in agriculture and factors hindering youth involvement in agriculture. Several of the studies reviewed that that about 80 percent of youth residing in the rural areas are engaged in agricultural activities, and about 90 percent residing in urban areas are engaged in non-agricultural activities (Adekunle, *et al* 2009; Sasiela, 1999; Idoko, 2014; Isah and Nafiu, 2013; Njenga, *et al* 2012).

Nigeria's government has attempted to stimulate youth's interest in agricultural production and processing since the late 1980s. In 1986, the federal government established the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to provide vocational training to the youth, and in 1987, the Better Life Programme was created to empower women, especially female youths in the rural areas through skills acquisition and healthcare training. In addition, the People's Bank and the Community Banks were established in 1989 and 1990 respectively, to provide credit facilities to low income earners embarking on agricultural production and other micro enterprises, with special consideration to youth engaged in agricultural production. In 1992, the Fadama programme was initiated to enhance food self-sufficiency, reduce poverty, and create opportunities for employment for youths in the rural areas.

Kano State government embarks on programme that aims to encourage out-of-

school youth and women in both urban and rural areas to pursue professional careers in agriculture. The training programme usually lasts for one month and covers the following areas: livestock production, management, marketing and value addition; fish production, management, marketing and value addition; poultry production, management and marketing. Other related areas include various programmes/ trades under, irrigation, farm mechanization and horticulture. The training is also expanded to include general knowledge in self-development and social education; farm management and business plan development; saving for self-reliance; financial management; and record keeping.

Community Re-orientation Council: An agency for youth and women empowerment in Kano State.

The Community Re-orientation Council (CRC) is about new paradigm that will chart the way for the socio-economic development of the people of Kano State. The overriding policy thrusts of CRC are poverty alleviation and sustainable economic growth through the promotion of community-led reform. CRC is about entrenchment of values and confidence in the people of Kano State and an attitude that encourages hard work and sustainable development. This attitude will ultimately create an enabling environment that will foster income generation, wealth creation, employment generation and poverty reduction amongst youth and women in the State.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Kano State. The State comprises of 44 Local Government areas and is located on longitude, 08° 02' N and latitude, 12° 30'E. 70% of the people of the state are engaged in agricultural production value chains with women participation in agricultural processing, food preparation, selling and maintaining small agribusinesses (KNARDA 2012).

A multi stage sampling procedure was used to select respondents for primary data collection. The sample consisted of 359 females and 131 males, making up a total of 489 respondents drawn from a population of 9796 trainees. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970). According to the table, if population size is 9,000, then 368 will be the sample size, but according to Borg and Gall

(2004) the larger the sample the more accurate the result.

Qualitative data was collected using focus group discussion (FGD) and key informant interview with 10 trainers/ school making up 40 participants in the FGD and 4 key informant interviews (1 institute), along with an interview with the Permanent Secretary. A structured questionnaire was administered to the respondent achieving 86% response rate. The 420 questionnaires returned were coded and entered into SPSS. Descriptive statistics (%) was used to analyse the data while the qualitative data was coded and transcribed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The institutes (Table 1) reported a population of 9796 persons consisting of 5936 females (60.56%) and 3864 males (39.44%). These findings are in consonance with Rotimi (2011) in Akawara, *et al* (2013) who puts the ages of unemployed youth in Nigeria to be between 15-25 years old. World Bank (2009) put the

figure of unemployed youth and women in Nigeria at about 40 million. Gender of respondents indicates women to be 60 % of the total number of trainees in the institutes, this has confirmed Muhammad, Abubashar and Rosni (2014) they are of the view that worldwide, as at 2010, 187 million are women that are creating and operating small enterprises, meaning that, 42% of the women in the world are entrepreneurs and therefore represent an important segment for economic growth and development. The need for training this category of people within the Nigeria context is very significant. Unemployment has significant effect on the Nigeria gross domestic product (over 65%) according to United Nation Industrial development organization (UNIDO, 2003) in a report on developing rural women and youth was of the view that gender inequality is an impediment to growth and poverty reduction as women and girls constitute $\frac{3}{4}$ of world poor and their poverty level worsen consequently.

Table 1: Record of trainees at various institutes for various agribusinesses

Institute	Number of Trainees	Female	Male
Livestock	1056	132	924
Fisheries	1600	800	800
Poultry	5000	500	5000
Mechanization	2140	2140	3854
Total	9796	5932	3864

Source: Institute's Annual Reports 2014

The CBN Governor in a lecture delivered in 2012 at Oxford Pan-African Conference noted that youth constitute a significant proportion of the entire labour force (Sanusi, 2012). However skills acquisition is very important for the effective utilization towards economic growth and development. Africa economies have evidently under performed in terms of investing in youth to support economic development”.

Less than half (40%) of the respondents have attained secondary school level of education, 10% post-secondary school, 30% primary school while 20% attended Qur'anic School. Education plays a vital role in any nation's development. Mathias, Mailafia, and Song

(2013) conducted a study on socio-economic impact of graduate unemployment in Nigeria and Vision 20:2020 evaluated the level of unemployment among graduates in Nigeria and concluded that with an astronomical population growth and over dependence on oil revenue which can no longer guaranteed the generation of employment opportunities even the graduate unemployment figure is staggering. Therefore there is a need for providing employable skills in agriculture and food chain which will help fast-track development.

The trainee's perception of the agriculture based skills acquisition training is expressed as follows:

“We are indeed grateful to the government of Kano state for recognizing our plight and for given us the opportunity to be part of this historic training and empowerment”

“We have formed various cooperative association, while some of our members (20%) had joined various schools of higher learning in the state, North West, University , Sa’adatu Rimi College of Education and others who dropped out of school are now back to complete their education because of various advises, guidance and moral teachings received at the institutes

The trainees also posited that the successes recorded under this programme are unprecedented in the history of the State. Table 2 summarises Modules for agribusiness training and skills acquisition within the institutes. The trainees noted that the major challenge encountered was carrying capacity

of the institutes. Livestock accommodates only 132/ batch, fisheries 400/ batch, poultry 600/ batch and farm mechanization 400/ batch, on 3 campuses. Sourcing for fingerlings and tanks (plastic) was another limiting factor in fisheries enterprises.

Table 2: Modules for agribusiness training and skills acquisition within the institutes

Institute	Modules
Livestock	Cattle fettering, Ram fettering, Dairy production, processing marketing and value addition. Meat, hides and skin processing. Rabbit production, processing, marketing and value addition.
Fisheries	Pond construction, Water management, Fish breeding processing, marketing and value addition.
Farm Machination	Contract spaying, Animal traction, Simple tools and equipment tractor repair
Poultry	Classification of poultry birds, Intensive production, Semi intensive extensive system of production, Brooding management operations, Disease identification, Broiler and cockerel production, Layer production.

Source: Institute’s annual report, 2014

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Millions of Nigerian youth and women both educated and uneducated have little prospect of getting jobs, worsening the unemployment situation. The youth are becoming a source of sustained social and political instability, religious extremism, ethnic conflicts, that continue to puncture holes is the unity of the country. The Kano State government had successfully empowered some youth and women through agribusiness. The establishment of skills acquisition centres to train youth and women in agribusiness has led to wealth creation, poverty reduction and employment generation for sustainable livelihood.

Agricultural based enterprise development among youth and women should be sustained in the State. Absence of employment opportunities affects youth and women in the society by predisposing them to danger of drugs abuse, prostitution and other social vices. Small agribusiness can help find means of sustenance and should be encouraged. The use of agriculture for youth and women empowerment needs and should be fine-tuned and extended to other part of the country if the nation is to use agriculture to make any meaningful headway toward youth and women empowerment for sustainable development.

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