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## Empowering Rural Dwellers for Effective Livelihood in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The Survey was conducted to investigate the empowerment status of the rural people, through training, in the execution of agricultural and rural development projects in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria. The population of the study consists of all relevant resource-poor rural dwellers. A multi-state selection process involving purposive and simple random sampling techniques was used to select a sample size of 350 respondents. However, out of the 350 Questionnaire distributed, only 316 were returned and used for analysis. Primary data were generated using well-structured questionnaire and the data analyzed used descriptive statistics such as mean, frequencies and percentage as well as inferential statistics such as Mann-Whitney analysis. It was found that training was generally organized for the rural dwellers (80%), the respondents saw the need of spending money on trainings (77%), and they received training on skills acquisition generally (76%) as well in agriculture, health, education and social works as a package (74%). The respondents, however, received moderate training in other areas like building, construction, maintenance than agriculture, health, education and social works (52%). They mainly received their training through Lecturers and group discussion (68%) while others got through other methods like mass media. Result of test of hypothesis of capacity building of the rural people in the development projects in the study area revealed that Benue State had  $\sum R_1 = 40.0$  while Nasarawa States had  $\sum R_2 = 38.0$ . The  $U'$  calculated = 19.0 and critical value = 0 at 5% level of other members like mass media significance. Since  $U_1 \text{ cal. } (19.0) > 0$  (critical value), the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted, implying that there was a significant difference between Benue and Nasarawa States in terms of capacity building of the rural people in the development projects because Benue State showed more commitment in capacity building of its citizens. It is therefore recommended that rural dwellers in the study area should be given comprehensive and sufficient training in other areas than agriculture, health, education, and social works so as to adequately cope with the contemporary issue of food insecurity and infrastructural underdevelopment, since holistic development of any community depends to a large extent, on agriculture and other sectors of the economy.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, rural dwellers, livelihood, Benue and Nasarawa States.

## INTRODUCTION

Community development is a movement to promote better living condition for the whole community through community initiated development programmes and facilitation of active participation of community members in the execution of the programmes (Ekong, 2003). According to Age (2009), true rural development means the development of human resource, thus unfolding and realizing great creative potentials. Rural development needs to be multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional and integrated in nature (Anonguku, 2013). In order to bring about a holistic rural development in Nigeria, it is necessary to first of all develop the agricultural sector, since there can be no meaningful rural transformation without the development of the agricultural sector.

Rural and agricultural development has been one of the major priority areas of the Nigerian governments since independence in 1960 (Agama, 2007). A lot of attention has been paid towards rural transformation with a view to empowering the rural people politically, socially and economically. Several government development programmes and policies have been evolved over the years and were targeted at rural and agricultural development. These programmes, according to Agbarevo and Obinne (2010), include: Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1976, Agricultural Development Projects (ADP) in 1978, National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) in 1970, Better Life for Rural Women in 1987, Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Projects (LEEMPS) in 1985, National Policy on Integrated Rural Development in 2001. Despite all the laudable rural and agricultural development programmes and policies put in place, majority of the rural communities in Benue and Nasarawa States of Nigeria are marginalized, neglected and relegated to the background for quite a long time now. This trend is worrisome and could probably be responsible for mass exodus of young people from the rural areas to urban centres in Benue and Nasarawa States. The study was, therefore,

aimed at empowering the rural dwellers to fully participate in the development of the rural communities for improved standard of living.

Hypothesis of the study: There is no significant difference between Benue and Nasarawa States in terms of capacity building of rural people in development programmes.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria. The two states are found in the same geo-political zone, North Central geo-political zone of Nigeria. Benue State lies on longitude 6°35' E to 10E and latitude 6° 30' N to 8° 10N of the equator (Anonguuet *al.*, 2008). The state has a population of 2,780,359 and total land area of 30,955 square kilometers (Benue State Government, 2002). Administratively Benue State is divided into 23 local government areas with the headquarters at Makurdi, a town on the bank of river Benue (Anonguuet *al.*, 2008. NPC, 2006).

The population of the study comprised all rural dwellers who are beneficiaries of the rural and agricultural development project activities in Benue and Nasarawa States. Three hundred and fifty (350) respondents were selected using a multi stage process involving purposive and simple random sampling techniques. However, only 316 were valued and used for analysis. Questionnaire was used to generate data and both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze them.

TABLE I: SAMPLING PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY AREA

Zone	LGA	Communities	Sample Frame	Sample Size (8%)
<b>BENUE STATE</b>				
A	Vandeikya Katsina-Ala	Mbakato	182	15
		Mbaatar	216	17
		Mbatima	202	16
		Mbakpev	212	17
		Shamija	205	16
B	Makurdi	Gever	180	14

	Gboko	Mbaiwan II	270	22
		Mbabai	167	13
		Agbadaichuo	137	11
C	Oju	Eddi-Inyima	143	12
	Okpokwu	Ohimini	246	20
		Gbegba	210	17
	<b>SUBTOTAL (a)</b>		<b>2370</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>NASARAWA STATE</b>				
SAZ	Lafia	JatauAngwan	200	16
		Buzu	165	13
	Awe	TudunAngas	162	13
		Marke	170	14
		AngwanAttah	210	17
CAZ	Nasarawa – Eggon	Awoga	120	10
		Gitata	144	12
	Akwanga	Akwahuma	140	11
		Betti	127	10
WAZ	Keffi	AngwanDariya	208	17
	Nasarawa	Wada	172	14
		Chiji	156	13
	<b>SUB TOTAL (b)</b>		<b>1974</b>	<b>160</b>
	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			

Source: Field Survey, (2012).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents the percentage distribution of respondents according to capacity building of rural people in the development projects in Benue and Nasarawa States. The results reveal that respondents in the study area agreed that training was organized (80.1 percent). Most respondents in the study area saw the need spending money on training of personnel for development projects (76.6 percent). Respondents acquired enough skills in relevant areas (74.4 percent). Generally, both states had high percentages of training of respondents in development projects. The implication of this is that the rural dwellers become more knowledgeable to contribute meaningfully to their rural communities. These findings agree with Ebohet *et al.*, (1995) who stated that without a strong human capital base, sustainable development is a nullity. In the

same manner, Muntaka, (2010) and Umar *et al.*, (2010) in their separate findings saw the need for capacity building of personnel for effective rural transformation.

Result of test of hypothesis of capacity building of the rural people in the development projects in the study area (Table 3) reveals that Benue State had  $\Sigma R_1 = 40.0$  while Nasarawa State had  $\Sigma R_2 = 38.0$ . The  $U_1$  calculated = 19.0 and critical value = 0 at 5% level of significance. Since  $U_1 \text{ Cal. } (19.0) > 0$  (critical value), the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted, implying that there is a significant difference between Benue and Nasarawa States as far as capacity building of rural people in the development projects is concerned.

**TABLE 2: CAPACITY BUILDING OF THE RURAL PEOPLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

Perception on capacity building	Benue (n=182)		Nas. (n=134)		Pooled (n=316)	
<b>Receive</b> training in Agriculture, health education and social works	Freq. 114	Percent 62.6	Freq. 121	Percent 90.3	Freq. 235	Percent 74.4
<b>Training</b> covers other areas than agric. Health, education and social works	52	28.6	112	83.6	164	51.9
<b>Lectures</b> and group discussion are used in training	99	54.4	117	87.3	216	68.4
<b>Training</b> generally received skills acquisition	118	64.8	123	91.8	241	76.3
<b>Training-</b> Training is organized for rural dwellers	147	80.6	106	79.1	253	80.1
<b>Need</b> – need spending money On training	132	72.5	110	82.1	242	76.6

Source: Field Survey, 2012

TABLE 3: MANN- WHITNEY (U) ANALYSIS OF CAPACITY BUILDING OF THE RURAL PEOPLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Capacity Building Variable	Benue (n=182)		Nasarawa State (n=134)	
	Freq.	R <sup>1</sup>	Freq.	R <sup>2</sup>
Training in Agriculture, health, education and social works	114	6.0	121	90.3
Training in other areas	52	1.0	112	5.0
Lectures and group discussion in training	99	2.0	117	7.0
Skills acquisition	118	8.0	123	10.0
Training- organized	147	12.0	106	3.0
Need spending money on training	132	11.0	110	4.0
	$N_1 = 6$		$\sum_1^R = 40.0$	
	$U_1 = (19.0)$		$N_2 = 6$	
			$\sum_2^R = 38.0$	

Source: Field Survey, (2012)

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Holistic transformation of rural communities requires comprehensive training of the rural dwellers so that they can contribute meaningfully in the various areas of human endeavour, it is therefore, recommended thus:

- i. Identified areas (fields) that have not been given serious attention in terms of training should be the focus. That is those areas outside agriculture, health, educational and social works.
- ii. Other methods of training than lecturers and group discussion should be involved in ensuring proper training of the rural dwellers for effective rural transformation.
- iii. Benue State particularly should do more in training the rural dwellers in other areas than agriculture, health, education and social works so as to contribute meaningfully to rural transformation.
- iv. Rural dwellers should reciprocate the kind gesture of sustained government deliberate efforts in capacity building by showing enthusiasm in receiving the training for improved livelihood.

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