

Rural Agricultural Development Scheme by Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and Rural Community Development in Bayelsa State

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Abstract

The study examined rural agricultural development scheme by Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and rural community development in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. One null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study, and stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting 338 respondents. A 15-item questionnaire titled: Rural Agricultural Development Scheme and Rural Community Development Questionnaire (RADSRCDO) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated and the reliability estimate, using test retest reliability method, ranged from 0.69 to 0.85. The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The result showed that there was a significant relationship between rural agricultural development schemes and rural community development. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made, among others, that more agricultural extension programmes should be extended to all localities in the state. This will be of greater benefit to the inhabitants of the state especially the farmers.

Keywords: Rural, agriculture, development, Niger, Delta, community.

Introduction

Agricultural production provides income, employment and food at affordable prices as well as raw materials for the processing industry and foreign exchange from exports. Creating a sustainable agricultural development paths means improving the quality of life in rural areas, ensuring enough food for present and future generation and generating sufficient income for farmers. Agriculture's important role is that of producing food for the rural and the urban population and cash crops for the export market to earn foreign

exchange. In this process, demand is stimulated for other products and services, and employment opportunities emerge to absorb the society's workforce. Akpan-Idiok (2005) asserted that the Federal Government has embarked on several agricultural policies with the intent to make the rural communities self-sufficient in food production and also restore the lost glory to agriculture. He reported that poverty alleviation programmes in the area of agricultural development are policies and projects for the revitalization and reinvigoration of the agricultural sector as a prime mover of Nigeria's rural economy. The poverty alleviation programmes in agriculture are geared towards making small scale farmers beneficiaries in communities. In Obot (2005) study, he stated that the most commendable policies of NGOs in communities in Cross River State are those of food security and poverty alleviation programmes including production of rice and cassava. The study by Obot (2005) was corroborated by Archibong (2004) in his study on agricultural initiatives and community based poverty alleviation programmes in Eket, Mkpato Enin and Ikot Abasi Local Government areas of Akwa Ibom State.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2001) stated that with the present population of people residing and earning a living in rural communities in various farms and non-farm enterprises, the Federal Government has come up with definite agricultural development policies that are matched with actions so as to alleviate poverty and ensure food security. The focus of Federal Government's community based poverty alleviation projects in the area is to ensure the provision of adequate food for rural community dwellers and promote development of cottage industries that would provide employment for rural dwellers.

Akpan (2005) asserted that the agricultural policies and development initiatives of the Federal Government's community-based poverty alleviation programmes aim at elevating agriculture as an instrument of rural economic revival and radical transformation of the poor rural economy. The over-riding objective is to inspire communities to recognize the centrality of agriculture as a noble economic enterprise. He concluded, from his study of Esit Eket, Eastern Obolo and Onna Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State, that community-based poverty alleviation programmes in agriculture have the major goal of producing a healthy community and ensuring that the communities are self-reliant and self-sufficient in food production. According to Odu and Agida (2005), in their study on government poverty alleviation programmes and agricultural practices in communities in Odukpani and Akamkpa, part of the government community-based poverty alleviation programmes is the provision of infrastructural facilities, agricultural extension services, supply of farm input and provision of credit facility to farmers. Odu and Agida (2005) stressed that the agricultural development of many NGO community-based poverty alleviation programmes are intended to strengthen the agricultural sector, promote domestic food production and encourage community participation in agricultural investment programmes.

Many NGO community based poverty alleviation programmes in the domain of agriculture are consistent with the 1988 agricultural policy objectives for Nigeria which include attainment of self-sufficiency in basic food commodities, increase in production of agricultural raw materials, enhancement of rural employment opportunities and improvement in the quality of life of rural communities, etc. Assibong (2005) observed a significant positive relationship between poverty alleviation programmes and agricultural development in rural communities. He reported in his study that the agricultural sub-sector of the Federal Government poverty alleviation programmes is based on home grown indigenous technologies embodying yield-increasing inputs that help to set the initial conditions favouring investment and output expansion; agricultural extension programmes to enhance efficiency in information and technology dissemination; and encouraging communities to participate in food production for enhanced well-being.

Rural agricultural development implies the sustained improvement in the standard of living of people through increase in output and incomes, expansion of productive employment and increased self-sufficiency in rural community food production. Consequently, the Federal Government's community-based poverty reduction programmes, according to Ekpo (2004), aim at reducing the degree of poverty and human misery by increasing the productivity of the rural poor and providing an increased array of goods and services. Ekpo (2004) stressed that agriculture is very important in alleviating poverty in the rural areas because it is the main occupation of rural communities. Therefore, any positive action on agriculture is bound to impact positively on the incomes of rural communities.

Okio (2005) examined the impact of community-based poverty alleviation programmes on rural agricultural development. The sample was 980 respondents drawn from communities in Yakurr, Akpabuyo and Odukpani Local Government Areas of Cross River State and communities in Esit Eket and Ibeno Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State. Using the correlation coefficient (r) analysis, he found a significant relationship between rural agricultural development and community based poverty alleviation programmes ($r= 0.07$) showing that the rural development is facilitated in some communities by NGO's community-based poverty alleviation programmes. Obibuaku (1993), in his study, revealed that many NGOs provide inputs that aid the rural dwellers in increasing their agricultural output. Such products are exchanged for money to further boost their productive capacity. Inputs like fertilizers, extension services, feeder roads, raw materials, storage facilities, market, easy credit and good education are the focal areas of agricultural development initiatives.

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations is already implementing a major national Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) in communities in Cross River State using target groups for community mobilization

(Udom, 2006). Udom (2006) asserted that many community-based poverty alleviation programmes under agriculture aim at enhanced community food self-sufficiency and improved rural food security and the income of poor farmers through improved production of cassava, yam and Irish potatoes, adoption of improved processing technologies, education on adequate storage methods and increase in support education in marketing activities.

Agriculture is very important in the development of rural areas because it is the main occupation of rural dwellers who form more than 70% of the population in most third world countries. Any positive action on agriculture is therefore bound to impact positively on the incomes of rural people (Ita, 2007). NGOs believe that a well-coordinated agricultural programme in communities has the capacity to impact widely in the rural economy. Udo-Anyang (2006) argued that many community-based programme in agriculture are laudable based on the various roles agriculture plays in the economy such as providing more food and raw materials. If the agricultural sector of the rural economy is unproductive then it is obvious that food insecurity will increase and funds diverted from capital projects to food importation from others States.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this was to investigate the relationship between rural agriculture development schemes by NDDC and rural community development in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Specially, the study sought to investigate the relationship between:

1. Rural agricultural development scheme by NDDC and rural community development in Bayelsa State

Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between rural agricultural development scheme by NDDC and rural community development in Bayelsa State.

Methodology

Ex-post factor research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 676 respondents. The sample of the study was 338 respondents randomly selected from 16 communities in the study area. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Rural Agricultural Development Schemes and Rural Community Development Questionnaire (RADSRCDDQ) designed by the researchers. The instrument had two sections, A and B. Section A had respondents demographic information while section B was a 15-item questionnaire in the form of modified six-point rating scale of Very Strongly Agree (VSA) – 6, Strongly Agree (SA) – 5, Agree (A) – 4, Disagree (D) – 3 Strongly Disagree (SD) – 2 and Very Strongly Disagree (VSD) – 1. The scoring for negatively worded items in section B was reversed. The instrument was duly validated and its reliability estimate established at 0.69 to 0.85 using test retest reliability method. The reliability coefficient was considered high enough to justify the

use of the instrument for the study. The copies of the instrument were administered personally by the researchers with eight research assistants trained for the purpose. At the end of the exercise, all the copies of the questionnaire were collected back by the researchers and the research assistants. For ease of data preparation, code was designed to each item and a coding schedule was prepared by developing a key for each of the constructs of the instrument. The data collected was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between rural agricultural development schemes by NDDC and rural community development in Bayelsa State.

The independent variable of the study is rural agricultural development while the dependent variable is rural community Development. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analytical technique was adopted to test the hypothesis. The result is as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between rural agricultural development schemes and rural community development in Bayelsa State (N=338)

Variables	ΣX ΣY	ΣX^2 ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-cal
Rural agricultural development scheme	5585	98061	86455	0.789
Rural community development	4965	78353		

*P<0.05, df=336, critical r=0.112

The result in Table 1 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.789 was found to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.112 at 0.05 level of significance and 336 degree of freedom. With this result the null hypothesis is rejected. The result therefore implies that there exist a significant relationship between rural agricultural development scheme by NDDC and rural community development. The positive r-value indicates that increase in rural agricultural development scheme by NDDC such as provision of agricultural loans, agricultural facilities such as tools and crops and agricultural extension programmes will lead to increase in rural community development in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of findings

The finding of this hypothesis revealed that there exist a significant relationship between rural agricultural development scheme by NDDC and rural community development in Bayelsa State. The finding specifically revealed that the rural agricultural development scheme by NDDC such as provision of farm facilities, construction of farm roads and

provision of agricultural loans significantly relates to rural community development in Bayelsa State. The finding of this study is in agreement with the finding of Assibong (2005), who observed a significant positive relationship between rural agricultural development scheme by NDDC and rural community development. His findings showed that the agricultural sub-sector of NDDC poverty alleviation programmes is based on a home grown indigenous technology embodying yield-increasing inputs that help to set the initial conditions favouring investment and output expansion; agricultural extension programmes to enhance efficiency in information and technology dissemination; and encouraging communities to participate in food production for enhanced well-being.

This finding is also in agreement with the finding of Ekpo (2004) who stated that there exists a significant relationship between rural agriculture development scheme by NDDC and rural community development. In the study, Ekpo (2004) stressed that agriculture is very important in alleviating poverty in the rural areas because it is the main occupation of rural communities, therefore, any positive action on agriculture is bound to impact positively on the incomes of rural communities. Also the finding of this study is in consonant with Okio (2005) who examined the impact of NDDC community-based poverty alleviation programmes on rural agricultural development. Using the correlation coefficient (r) analysis, he found a significant relationship between rural agricultural development and NDDC community based poverty alleviation programmes ($r= 0.07$) showing that the rural development is facilitated in some communities by NDDC community-based poverty alleviation programmes. The finding of this study is also in line with that of Obibuaku (1993), whose study found that NDDC provides inputs that aid the rural dwellers in increasing their agricultural output, which are exchanged for money to further boost their productive capacity.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between rural agricultural development by NDDC and rural community development. It was also concluded that every Nigerian youth stands the chance to be self-employed and should be encouraged to take agricultural skill acquisition programmes seriously.

Recommendation

1. NDDC should ensure that rural agricultural extension programmes are extended to all localities in the state. This will be of great benefit to the inhabitants of the state especially the farmers.

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