

## **Involvement of non-governmental organisations' in Rural Development in Nigeria: A case study of Osogbo Catholic Diocesan Rural Development Programme (RUDEP)**

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### **Abstract**

Rural development is aimed at integrating the relatively backward rural communities into the sphere of national development. Highly recognised in respect of this are the efforts of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) like the Catholic Diocesan Rural Development Programme (RUDEP) providing extension services to local farmers. To assess the programme, the study described the personal characteristics of farmers involved in the programme, identified the benefits derived by farmers and assessed their perception of RUDEP. A total of 110 respondents were sampled from nine farmers' groups selected proportionately from a total of 26 farmers' groups covered by the programme. Pre-tested and validated interview schedule was then used for data collection. The results show that majority of the farmers were aged between 31 and 60 years; mostly Christians (76.4%) and indigenes of the respective communities (72.7%). The main benefits derived by farmers from RUDEP were procurement of farm inputs, advice on savings, farm management recommendations and procurement of credits. They consequently had favourable disposition towards the programme. It was concluded that RUDEP facilitated the agricultural production and socio-economic development of rural dwellers in the programme areas.

**Keywords:** Rural development, Development programme, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)

### **Introduction**

Rural development is the integrated approach to food production as well as physical, social and institutional infrastructural provision with the ultimate goal of bringing about both quantitative and qualitative changes which result in improved living standard of the rural population (Obetta and Ohide 2012). It could also be defined as a social process which involves the transformation of the rural community into a socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly and materially desirable condition with the purpose of improving the quality of life of the rural population (Jibowo, 2000). In essence, rural development is aimed at integrating the relatively backward rural

communities into the sphere of national development.

The vastness of the rural population of most developing countries underscores the importance of rural development as a panacea for sustainable national economic development. To this end, Obetta and Ohide (2012) opined that embarking on rural development in Nigeria is very important; considering the fact that more than two-thirds of the population are living in rural areas where they experience a lot of misery, poverty, morbidity and underdevelopment. To tackle this, rural development strategies usually take the form of programmes (agricultural and non-agricultural) which implement projects to assist rural areas (Oakley and Garforth,

1993). Agriculture being the bedrock of Nigeria's economy through its provision of source of livelihood for most of the rural dwellers and raw material source for local industries is a key means through which rural development can be attained. In recognition of this, agricultural development for the terminal purpose of developing the rural areas has been the focus of many programmes and institutions by the Nigerian government since inception.

Although, the series of institutions or programmes established over the years such as Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs), River Basin Development Authorities, Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (defunct), Family Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation (FEAP), National Directorate of Employment and Better Life for Rural Women (defunct) had agricultural extension outlets, they have not been able to meet the enormous demands of the teeming rural population. The problems of insufficient funding and resultant manpower inadequacies, mismanagement, policy inconsistency among others, cumulate to ineffectiveness in the various programmes (Ajadi 2000; Jibowo, 2000; Apantaku et. al., 2005). Failure to meet the intended goal (agricultural development) thus results as agricultural development cannot be achieved without an efficient and effective extension system (Koyenikan, 2008). In other words, weaknesses in the programmes' extension system translate into greater obstacles on the path of developing the agricultural sector and consequently the rural communities.

Addressing this situation has necessitated the efforts of individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and

community-based organisations as well as international donor agencies putting up a number of agricultural extension and rural development initiatives to help rural dwellers cope positively and effectively with the poverty situation in Nigeria (Ajadi, 2000). In Kenya, NGOs have proven to improve state *capacity* by extending services to sectors or communities for which public agencies do not have adequate resources (Brass, 2010). Isife and Madukwe (2005) also pointed out the provision of agricultural extension services to farmers as part of the activities of NGOs in Nigeria. Wahab *et al.* (2011) established that NGOs and community-based organisations' services in Nigeria are usually well managed, efficient and cost-effective. The authors are of the opinion that NGOs' involvement in agricultural and rural development in Nigeria facilitates the improvement of quality of life of the rural population. In fact, they are known to be very prominent in effective implementation of government programmes towards sustainable rural development (Enyioko, 2012). The private sector extension agency was more effective than the public sector extension agency (Onyenkazi and Gana, 2009).

Prominent faith-based NGOs like the Catholic, Anglican and Seventh Day Adventist Churches have for years provided educational and health facilities for the development of Nigerian rural areas (Jibowo, 2000). The Catholic Dioceses' Rural Development Programme (RUDEP) focussed on in this study was started as Oyo Diocesan Agricultural Programme (ODAP) with village extension only but later included youth training in the area of sustainable agriculture in order to mobilise youth to embrace the farming profession.

The programme targeted small-scale farmers living in villages where social infrastructures are in a deplorable state. The programme provided free services on soil fertility, animal husbandry and crop management, group formation for networking, savings and loan initiatives and empowerment generally (Competence Centre, 2008). The activities of RUDEP have been going on since 1994 and like other prominent NGOs involved rural development, they are recognised as stakeholders in the efforts to improve farmers' socio-economic conditions in the state. However, the programme has not been assessed from the beneficiaries' point of view. Thus this study aimed at assessing RUDEP by ascertaining the benefits derived by the farmers involved and their perception of the programme. The objectives of this study are to describe the personal characteristics of farmers involved in RUDEP, identify the benefits derived by farmers from the programme and assess the farmers' perception of RUDEP.

### Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the three RUDEP zones namely Osogbo, Ijesha and

Ila all in Osun state. A two-stage sampling procedure was employed to select the respondents. The first stage involved proportionate selection of 30% of RUDEP farmers' groups in each zone which gave a total of 9 groups selected across the villages covered by the programme. At the second stage, all members of the chosen groups (between 10-15 farmers per group) were interviewed. The collection of data was carried out with the aid of structured interview schedule to obtain data on the farmers' personal characteristics, the benefits derived from participating in RUDEP and perception of the programme. The benefits derived by farmers from RUDEP was measured on a 4-point scale of always scored 3, occasionally 2, rarely 1 and never 0 while their perception was measured on 5-point likert scale viz: strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) for positive statements and the reverse for negative statements. The data obtained were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviation.

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents sampled for the study**

<b>Zone groups</b>	<b>Total number of (30% of total)</b>	<b>Number of groups selected</b>	<b>Number of members interviewed</b>
Osogbo	9	3	34
Ijesha	13	4	50
Ila	5	2	26
Total	26	9	110 respondents

**Results and Discussions**

**Personal characteristics:**

Data in Table 2 show the results of respondents' personal characteristics. It was observed that most of the farmers (74.5%) were aged between 31 and 60 years while those above 60 years of age constituted 22.7% of the sample population and only 2.7% were young farmers aged below 30 years. This result shows that most of the RUDEP farmers were within the middle age range of 31 to 60 years as shown by their mean age which was  $51.55 \pm 11.57$  years. This reflects the assertion of Jibowo (2000) that the rural areas have a higher proportion of their population above the age of 45 years. Also, majority (75.7%) were males and only about a quarter (22.7%) were females. Most (90.9%) of them were

married while 4.5%, 2.7% and 1.8% were unmarried, divorced and widowed respectively. This revealed that most of the farmers were in marital relationships.

Some (23.6%) of the respondents were Muslims while the majority (76.4%) were Christians. This highlights the provision for the participation of non-Christians in the programme. Majority (72.7%) of the respondents were indigenes of the communities in which the programme operates while the 23.7% were non-indigenes living in those communities. The community indigenes here are the people who were born and bred in the community while the non-indigenes are the non-natives that were brought into the community by circumstances such as marriage, job opportunities and personal interest among

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by personal characteristics**

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Sd.
Age			51.55	11.57
<30	3	2.7		
31-60	82	74.5		
Above 60	25	22.7		
Sex				
Male	83	75.7		
Female	27	24.5		
Marital status				
Single	5	4.5		
Married	100	90.9		
Divorced	3	2.7		
Widowed	2	1.8		
Religion				
Christianity	84	76.4		
Islam	26	23.6		
Indigenous status				
Indigenes	80	72.7		
Non indigenes	30	27.3		
Years of formal education			7.75	3.63
Years of farming experience			18.24	10.2

Source: Field survey, 2015.

others (Akpomuvie, 2010). The mean length of formal education of the farmers was 7.75 years with standard deviation of 3.63. This shows that many of the farmers had at least primary school education. As for their farming experience, the mean was found to be  $18.24 \pm 10.2$  years. This indicates that the respondents had depended on farming as a source of livelihood for a long period of time which would have transcended into increased prowess for extension services to improve their production and consequent change in their economic status.

#### **Benefits derived by farmers from RUDEP**

Data in Table 3 show the ranked order of benefits derived by farmers through their participation in RUDEP. It was gathered that the benefits derived by majority of the farmers through their participation in RUDEP were procurement of improved seeds (2.93), procurement of farm tools at reduced price (2.89), advice on savings (2.86) and recommendations on farm maintenance (2.85). Following these, the farmers were also provided with credit facilities (2.78), advice on choice of appropriate chemicals for storage (2.65), improved financial status (2.53) as well as encouragement of use of organic fertiliser (2.26). The areas in which majority of the farmers occasionally benefitted include recommendation of appropriate planting distance (2.18), advice on timely and correct use of fertiliser (2.14), advice on building self-reliance (2.10), advice on profit utilisation (2.06), recommendations on best use of available land (2.03), introduction of new cropping systems (1.99) and advice on small scale enterprise development (1.82).

These results showed that the range of benefits derived by farmers from RUDEP was wide as services were rendered to assist farmers in various aspects of production up to storage as well as small scale enterprise development. The most prominent of the benefits as shown by the results were the procurement of quality inputs, provision of recommendations on optimum production procedures, savings and credit facilities as well as capacity building to improve their production and build self-reliance. This is similar to the findings of Olujide (2006) who reported enhanced income-generating activities, increased agricultural production, access to credit facilities and improved standard of living among others as the benefits derived from NGOs' activities. The findings correspond with that of Enyioko (2012) who established that most NGOs' beneficiaries considered their rural development initiatives as most beneficial. The findings are also similar to that of Olujide (2006) who reported that NGOs assist people in rural development activities.

These findings could be associated with the small size and horizontal structure allowing for flexibility, relatively well managed, efficient, cost-effective programmes and strict pursuance of sustainability which are characteristic of most NGOs' rural development initiatives (Enyioko, 2012; Wahab *et al.*, 2011). By implication, RUDEP enhanced farmers' agricultural production and economic development through capacity building and promotion of self-reliance. Given this and the position of *Oakley and Garforth* (1993) that development is building up people so that they can build a future for themselves, the claim that RUDEP like other prominent NGOs are important stakeholders in rural

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by benefits derived from RUDEP programme**

Benefits	Mean	Sd	Rank
Provision of improved seeds	2.93	0.414	1 <sup>st</sup>
Procurement of farm tools at reduced price	2.89	0.431	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Advice on savings	2.86	0.417	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Recommendations on farm maintenance	2.85	0.394	4 <sup>th</sup>
Source of credit	2.78	0.495	5 <sup>th</sup>
Choosing appropriate chemicals for storage	2.65	0.629	6 <sup>th</sup>
Improved financial status	2.53	0.589	7 <sup>th</sup>
Encourage use of organic manure	2.26	0.762	8 <sup>th</sup>
Recommendation of appropriate planting distance	2.18	0.485	9 <sup>th</sup>
Advice on timely and correct use of fertilizer	2.14	0.710	10 <sup>th</sup>
Advice on building self-reliance	2.10	0.607	11 <sup>th</sup>
Advice on profit utilization	2.06	0.474	12 <sup>th</sup>
Recommendations on best use of available land	2.03	0.597	13 <sup>th</sup>
Introduction of new cropping system	1.99	0.456	14 <sup>th</sup>
Encouragement of small scale enterprise development	1.82	0.593	15 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field survey, 2014

development in Nigeria is underscored. This also seconds the point noted by Omofonmwan and Odia (2009) that Non-Governmental Organisations are a positive approach to rural development.

**Farmers' perception of RUDEP**

The results presented in Table 4 show that majority of the farmers strongly agreed with the following statements in decreasing order: RUDEP facilitates access to improved seed (4.87), RUDEP has improved my economic status through provision of relevant recommendations (4.75), Savings, thrifts and credit schemes through group formation are encouraged (4.70) and the programme has transformed our community by improving our livelihoods (4.63). Also, majority of the farmers disagreed with the following negative statements: there is no follow-up after training sessions to evaluate performance (4.05), the programme is biased because preferences are usually

given to Catholics (4.2), it is targeted towards attracting more members to the church (4.29), there is poor communication during training sessions as not all members can hear the instructor (4.35) and participation in RUDEP is a waste of time (4.47).

Hence, the farmers are of the conviction that RUDEP facilitated access to inputs, provided platform for improvement of economic status, improvised savings and micro-credit schemes for farmers and transformed their livelihoods in a bid to develop the community. The farmers strongly opposed the listed negative statements from which it could be indicated that they dissociated themselves from the opinion that the programme had no provision for follow-up of trainings, was biased in its preferences, used ineffective communication methods and time-wasting. In summation, the weighted mean score (4.37) revealed that the farmers involved in RUDEP generally

**Table 4: Farmers' perception of RUDEP**

Statements	Mean score
RUDEP programme facilitates access to improved seed	4.87
RUDEP has improved my economic status through provision of relevant recommendations	4.75
Savings, thrifts and credit schemes through group formation are encouraged	4.70
The programme has transformed our community by improving our livelihood	4.62
There is no follow up after training sessions to evaluate performance	4.05
The programme is bias because preferences are usually given to catholic members	4.20
The programme is targeted towards winning more members to the church members in the group	4.29
There is poor communication during training sessions as not all members could hear the instructor	4.35
Participation in RUDEP is a waste of time	4.47
Weighted mean	4.37

Source: Field survey, 2014.

have positive disposition towards the programme. This finding corroborates that of Shashikumar and Sundaraswamy (1999) who established that people generally (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) have favourable disposition towards NGO programmes. This position of the farmers could be explained by the improvement of their socio-economic status which is as a result of their participation in RUDEP. Also, the fact that NGOs' programmes usually have established credibility with the farmers (Wahab *et al.*, 2011) could have contributed to this disposition.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

RUDEP demonstrated substantial initiative in uplifting the socio- economic conditions of the rural populace through the provision of free extension services to farmers in deplorable conditions. The participating farmers were opportune to access an array of benefits with the most prominent of these being the procurement of quality inputs,

provision of recommendations on optimum production procedures, savings and credit services as well as capacity building to improve production and facilitation of building self-reliance. Expectedly, their perception of the operation of RUDEP programmes was favourable in consequence of the improvement the programme had brought to their agricultural production and economic condition. Thus, it is concluded that RUDEP facilitated increased productivity and socio-economic upliftment of the programme's beneficiaries and the host communities at large.

It was recommended that the coverage and scope of the programme should be expanded to cover more areas in the state and beneficiaries should be implored to pass technical or advisory information received to other farmers in order to promote trickling down effect of the programme to non-beneficiaries, thereby further enhancing the coverage.

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