

The Role of Youth Associations in Empowering Youths in Agricultural Activities in Adamawa State Nigeria

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Abstract: The study examined the role of Youth Associations in empowering youths in Adamawa Central Senatorial District of Adamawa State, Nigeria. The study used primary data obtained through structured questionnaires administered to 186 respondents. A random sampling procedure was used to select 31 associations from 71 registered associations. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used for data analysis. Results from the study show almost all of the respondents (96.8%) are between 15-35 years of age, with a dismal 4.3% that had no formal education. Married men and women constituted 32.3% of the respondents while single 67.7%. Result on the skills acquired by youths as a result of joining association's activities reveals that 84.4% of the respondents acquired one agricultural skill or the other, with crop production, cattle fattening and poultry production accounting for 30.6, 42.5 and 11.3%, respectively. As a result of the skills acquired, 72.6% of the beneficiaries were engaged in the personal agricultural activities. The multiple regression analysis gave an R^2 value of 63% revealing that there was no significant relationship between youths' participation in Agricultural activities with age and sex, but experience, income, extension visit and access to credit were found significant at 1% level and educational level at 5%. The study concluded that participation in agricultural related youth associations was very profitable as those who were found to be participating learned various skills and majority of them extended those technologies to their own farms. It is recommended that credit facilities be made available by both government and non-governmental agencies to youths and also encourage them to join associations so as to reduce redundancy among them.

Key words: Role of youth, empowering youth, agricultural activities, association, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Youths implies a group of young people in a society who have a lot of energy, new ideas, new ways to see life and face problems (Onyeoziri, 2002). Similarly, Soeze (2006) defined youth as an individual between 18-40 years while youth association is being defined as organized group of young people who consciously and creativity employ their knowledge, skill and resources to bring about increased and effective changes in their economic, physical, physiological, social and political well being (Maimder, 1972). Empowerment on the other hand, is being defined as a multidimensional social process that helps people to gain control over their own lives (Pitman and Wright, 1991).

Worldwide, it is estimated that there were 1.2 billion youths in the year 2000 and 53 % of them live in rural areas (Onyeoziri, 2002). In Nigeria, youths dominate the

population of the estimated population of 140 million in 2006, 45 % fall in the 0-14 years age bracket and the mean age is 17.56 years (UN System in Nigeria, 2000). According to Onyeoziri (2002) 44 % of the Nigerian youths are males while 56 % are females, 61 % live in rural areas and 39 % in the urban centers.

Youths have been noted to play a vital role in agricultural production especially in developing countries like Nigeria, where their contribution is paramount. Studies have shown that children and youths contribute significantly in agricultural activities (Ugwoke *et al.*, 2005). Fasina and Okunola (2004) reported that all 120 respondent sampled in their study on impact of agricultural programme on food production in Ondo State were youths and all of them learned various agricultural skills while 68.3 % of the respondents extended those technologies to their farms. Laogun *et al.* (2000) reported that 90 % of youths and children were found on farms

after school hours and during holidays in rural south west of Nigeria. However, because of Western Education, that our youths are acquiring everyday, there has been a depletion of this youthful labour force in agriculture. There are mass rural urban migrations, of young graduates who mostly have no vocational or technical looking for scarce white collar jobs (NEEDS, 2004). This migration leads to increased level of the unemployment in urban areas, social ills and vices among others. A survey by National Manpower Board in 1990 shows a glooming picture on the unemployment figure in the country. About 5.7 million graduates are said to be unemployed, while the figure was been predicted to hit 15 million by the end of 2005 (Oladiya *et al.*, 2005). Also National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2004), reported that urban unemployment in Nigeria is estimated to be about 10.8 %. Even those who are employed are clamoring for better standard of living and their expectations are rising daily. This situation motivated many youths to join associations for agricultural activities which will not only increase food production and to an extent, reduce the gap between food production and its demand in the country but also create a career opportunity for the youths in agriculture thereby empowering them in agricultural decision making of the country.

Objectives of the study: The broad objectives of the study was to examine they youths empowerment through agricultural Youth Associations in Adamawa Central Senatorial District of Adamawa State. The specific objectives were to:

- Examine the socio-economic characteristics of youths participating in agricultural youth associations.
- Ascertain the relationship between the socio-economic characteristics and their participation.
- Assess the empowerment acquired by youths through agricultural skill learned.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Adamawa Central Senatorial District. The district comprises of 6 Local Government Areas, out of which three were selected for the study using Random Sampling Techniques (by ballot).

List of the 71 registered agricultural youth associations was obtained from the social welfare office of the 3 local government areas and used as sampling frame. One associations was drawn from each of the 31 wards of the 3 local government areas and 6

respondents were selected by the same ballot method from each of the 31 selected associations making a total of 186 respondents who were served with structured questionnaires.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analyses. Descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, skill acquired and personal agricultural activities engaged by respondents due to skills acquired. While the inferential statistics (Multiple regression analysis) was employed to determine the relationship between socio-economic factors and the level of the youth participation in agricultural activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the socio-economic characteristics of youths participating in agricultural youth associations. Majority (75.8%) of the respondents were male, while 24.2% were female. This implies that males participate more in organized youth activities in the study than females. This could be as a result of socio-cultural and religious barrier affecting females participations in the area. Results of age distribution reveals that 4.8 % were between 15-20 years. This indicates that the respondents are in their prime age and therefore, are energetic and could put in their best in their agricultural activities.

Table 1 also shows that only 4.3% of the respondents have no formal education while 95.7% had formal education (out of which 5.9% primary, 32.8% had secondary while 61.9% attained advanced level). One can therefore infer from this result that with the preponderance of educated youths in agricultural activities, learning and acquiring of life long skills will be relatively easy.

It could be observed from the data on Table 1 that 67.7% of the respondents were single and 32.3% were married. Since most of the respondents are single they have more time to learn and imbibe skills. The result (Table 1) also reveals that 24.2% earn N20, 000-N40, 000 per annum as income from agriculture while 17.7% earn above N80, 000 per annum which is more than minimum wage of states government workers (N66, 000 per annum). From the result, one can therefore say that this youths have gained employment.

Analysis of the result in Table 2 shows that experience in association activities was significant at 1% level. This implies that as level of experience increases so also participation in agricultural activities. Result on the relationship between age (x_2) and their participation shows that there was no significant relationship. The

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of youths participating in agricultural youth association (n = 186)

| Socio-economic variable | Frequency | (%) |
|-------------------------|-----------|------|
| Sex | | |
| Female | 45 | 24.2 |
| Male | 141 | 75.8 |
| Age in years | | |
| 15-20 | 9 | 4.8 |
| 21-25 | 18 | 9.7 |
| 26-30 | 81 | 43.5 |
| 31-35 | 72 | 38.7 |
| Above 35 | 6 | 3.2 |
| Educational background | | |
| No formal education | 8 | 4.3 |
| Primary | 11 | 5.9 |
| Secondary | 61 | 32.8 |
| Diploma/NCE | 36 | 19.4 |
| HND/Degree | 70 | 37.6 |
| Marital status | | |
| Single | 126 | 67.7 |
| Married | 60 | 32.3 |
| Divorced | - | - |
| Widowed | - | - |
| Annual income (N) | | |
| 20, 000-40, 000 | 45 | 24.2 |
| 41, 000-60, 000 | 36 | 19.4 |
| 61, 000-80, 000 | 72 | 38.7 |
| Above 80, 000 | 33 | 17.7 |

Source: Field survey, 2006

result also shows that no significant relationship exists between sex (x_3) and their level of participation.

Income (x_4) was found to be significant at 1%. This means that as the level of income increases, so also the level of participation will increase. This could be as a result of conservation of shares of the income in to more advance type of enterprises, producing increasing quantities of different produce. The result also shows that there exists significant relationship at 1% level between contacts with extension agents (x_5) and participation. Access to credit (x_6) was also significant at 1% level. this indicated that those who have access to credit would participate more .

Result on Table 2 also show that education (x_7) is significant at 5% level. This indicates that, the higher the level of the respondents education, the higher would be his level of participation in associations agricultural activities. Fasina and Okunola (2004) reported a similar positive relationship between education and level of participation of youths in a study of impact of youths agricultural programme of food production in Ondo State of Nigeria.

Table 3 shows that 30.6% of the respondents learned crop production skills, 42.5% of them acquired animal fattening skills while 11.3% poultry production skills and 15.6% of the respondents reported not to have acquired any skill. This could be probably because they joined the associations newly. The result corroborated the findings

Table 2: Relationship between socio-economic characteristics and youths participation in agriculture youth associations (Y)

| Variable | Coefficient | Standard error | T-Value |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Experience X_1 | 6528.2 | 999.0 | 6.53* |
| Age X_2 | -148.2 | 309.8 | -0.48 ^{NS} |
| Sex X_3 | 4220.1 | 2670.7 | 1.58 ^{NS} |
| Income X_4 | 11257.6 | 1652.0 | 6.81* |
| Extension contact X_5 | 2410.4 | 635.9 | 3.79* |
| Access to credit X_6 | 1908.2 | 3096.5 | 3.07* |
| Education level X_7 | 499.7 | 218.1 | 2.29** |
| Constant | 6735.0 | | |
| R ² | 0.63 | | |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.61 | | |
| F-Ratio | 28.9 | | |

Source:Field survey, 2006, * = Significant at 1%, ** = Significant at 5%, NS = Not Significant, Y = Number of Agric Activities engaged by a youth

Table 3: Skills acquired and personal agricultural activities engaged due to skills acquired by youths (n = 186)

| Variable | Frequency | (%) |
|---------------------------|-----------|------|
| Skills | | |
| Crop production | 57 | 30.6 |
| Animal fattening (Cattle) | 79 | 42.5 |
| Poultry production | 21 | 11.3 |
| No skill learn | 29 | 15.6 |
| Personal activity | | |
| Animal fattening | 72 | 38.7 |
| Poultry production | 15 | 8.1 |
| Crop production | 48 | 27.4 |

Source:Field survey, 2006

by Fasina and Okunala (2004) who reported that all 120 youths sampled in their study on impact of agricultural programme on food production in Ondo State learned various agricultural skills and 68.3% of them extended those technologies to their farms.

Table 3 also reveals that 38.7% of the respondents were engaged in animal fattening after acquiring the skills from their associations, 8.1% were engaged in poultry production and 25.8% of the respondents were engaged in crop production. The remaining 27.4% claimed that, they did not engage in any personal agricultural activity. This could be as a result of financial constraint to start up their personal agricultural activities as some indicated in their responses.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions are drawn. Participating in youth association agricultural activities was very profitable both in terms of monetary aspect and skill acquisition. As those who were found to be participating in associations activities, learned various skills. The unemployed youths were able to secure a living through agricultural youth associations, thus become useful to themselves and the society.

Agricultural youth associations have thus been able to impact positively on the lives of the youths in the study area. The following recommendations were therefore forwarded.

- Credit facilities should be made available by both government and non-governmental agencies to youths at lowest possible interest rate. So that those who acquire skills can start their own personal activity.
- All stake holders in youth development should encourage acquisition on life-long skills.
- Greater commitment should be directed at getting all children of school age enrolled and kept in school. This is because the level of education (Literacy) is one of the factors limiting empowerment.
- Youths who are already in associations should encourage more youths to join them by enlightening them so as to reduce redundancy among our young graduates. Since these graduates are educated, this makes them more readily to learn innovations with ease and disseminate them.

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