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Assessment of youths' participation in activities of value chain development programme in Anambra state, Nigeria

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Abstract
The study assessed youths' participation in activities of Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) in Anambra State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 100 respondents. Data were collected from primary source through the use of validated questionnaire. Data were analysed using percentage, mean score and multiple linear regression. The findings showed that youths were mostly involved in rice production (M=2.88), rice processing (M= 2.72), cassava production (M= 2.68) and rice marketing (M= 2.05). Age, educational level, programme experience and annual income had positive significant influence on the extent of youth participation in the programme's activities at 5% level. The VCDP beneficiaries had very high benefits in increased access to improved rice/cassava varieties, provision of agro-chemicals, increase in income, provision of all-weather feeder roads, adequate trainings on the improved technologies, increase in yield, and ease in marketing of produce. The major challenges identified were late/ untimely distribution of inputs, difficulty in payment of counterpart fund, poor monitoring and evaluation, high cost of production, fluctuation in prices of products, corruption and materialism among staff and poor off-taker implementation. The need for timely and adequate supply of agro-inputs and credits at subsidized rate by the service providers was one of the recommendations made.

Keywords: youths, participation, value chain development programme

Introduction

Youth is referred to as young women and men, in all their diversity of experiences and contexts. The age range may be 15−24 or 25−30 (and even beyond through age 35), based on contextual realities and regional and national youth policy directives. Flexibility in defining youth allows for country specific policies and programming, considering the heterogeneous nature of the youth population, and recognizing that different age groups within the younger population may have different needs in different contexts (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2014) [21]. Mac-Ikemenjima (2020) [14] in his study defined youth as any individual between the ages of 15 and 30. This definition derives primarily from the age range of the students in the study cohort, rather than convention or theory, and is, however, used with the cognizance that youth is a contested concept and lacks a common definition. According to National Youth Policy of Nigeria, the youth comprises all males and females aged 18 – 35 years, who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Young people in this age group require social, economic and political support to realize their full potentials. They are characterized by energy, enthusiasm, ambition, creativity, and promise; they are also faced with high levels of socio-economic uncertainty and volatility thereby becoming the most vulnerable segment of the population. They also represent the most active, the most volatile, and yet the most vulnerable segment of the nation's population (Federal Ministry of Youth Development, 2009) [11]. Generally, within the life span of person, the transition period from childhood to absolute adult capable of independent living is referred to as youth. There is therefore no clear cut age range. However, most resource persons and researchers lay emphasis on the age range or group from 18 years of age to 35 years and this incidentally make up the working labour force. With respect to geographical location, definitional variation exists (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2001) [12].

Participation refers to the involvement of the target group in programmes. According to Ataneh (2012) [9], participation entails the ability of individuals to have an input in the decision making process and to play a role in measures aimed at improving their quality of life. Mohammed (2016) [16] stressed that development scholars are of the opinion that participation is a pre-requisite to successful implementation of any programme. Youth participation is the involving of youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with opportunities for planning and/or decision-making affecting others in an activity whose impact or consequence is extended to others. Youth participation is the active engagement of young people throughout their own communities. It is often used as shorthand for youth participation in many forms, including decision-making, sports, schools and any activity where young people are not historically engaged (Olusola, 2017) [19]. Adekoya (2016) [1] noted that youth participation in agriculture is definitely the only means to reduce unemployment rate in Nigeria. Agriculture is no doubt a viable means of generating sustainable income in a developing nation like Nigeria.

However, to enhance involvement of youths in agriculture, the Federal government of Nigeria in collaboration with Foreign Agencies or private sectors came up with different agricultural projects, policies and programmes which supposedly to have

involved youths (Nwalieji, Okeke, Uzuegbunam and Udemezue, 2018) [18]. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) was one of these programmes initiated. The Federal Government of Nigeria (hereafter called the Borrower) received a credit from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (hereafter called loan) and has since 2014 been implementing a six years FGN/IFAD assisted Value Chain Development Programme (FGN/IFAD/VCDP) in six states of Anambra, Benue, Ebonyi, Niger, Ogun, Taraba, and in five Local Government Areas each in all the states. The VCDP was initiated to enhance the productivity and profitability of smallholder producers, processors and marketers in the crops' (especially rice and cassava) value chain. Government targets to achieve this objective by increasing access of the actors in the rice and cassava value chain to improved inputs, modern technologies, machines and equipment, road, irrigation, water, processing and marketing infrastructure, and finance. The primary target groups are; (i) poor rural household engaged in the cassava and rice value chain (VCs) who cultivate not more than 5 hectares of land under rice/cassava); and (ii) small-scale processors (processing capacity of an average of 2MT/day for cassava and 4MT/day for rice) and traders, with emphasis on women and youth (Anambra State Value Chain Development Programme (ANSVCDP), 2016) [6].

However, since youth is one of the primary target groups of the value chain development programme (VCDP) in Anambra State, the need to ascertain their level of participation in the various activities (rice and cassava production, processing and marketing) of the programme becomes imperative. This will portray the extent of achievement of the programme in youths' involvement towards reducing unemployment rate and enhancing the productivity and profitability in rice and cassava value chains. It is therefore against this backdrop that this research work is undertaken to assess youths' participation in the activities of value chain development programme in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study specifically determined level of youths' participation in the value chain development programme activities, examined relationship between socio-economic characteristics of youths and their level of participation in the programme, ascertained youths' perception of the benefits for participation in the programme, and identified challenges to effective youths' participation in the programme.

Methodology

The Study Area

The study area was Anambra State, Nigeria. The State consists of twenty one (21) Local Government Areas (LGAs), 177 autonomous communities and four (4) agricultural zones namely, Onitsha, Aguata, Awka and Anambra agricultural zones. The State is located between latitude $6^{0}45^{1}$ and $5^{0}44^{1}$N and longitude $6^{0}36^{1}$ and $7^{0}29^{1}$E. It has an estimated population of 4,182,032 with the male population of 50.9% and female 49.1% (National Population Commission (NPC), 2006) [17]. It has a total land area of about 4,415.54 square kilometer, 70% which is suitable for agricultural production. The Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) pilot project covered five LGAs and their environs in Anambra State. These include Anambra East, Anambra West, Awka North, Ayamelum and Orumba North LGAs. The VCDP was initiated to enhance the productivity and profitability of smallholder producers, processors and marketers in the crops' (especially rice & cassava) value chain (ANSVCDP, 2015) [5].

Population, Sampling Procedure and Method of Data Collection

The population of the study comprised all the VCDP beneficiaries below the age of 50 years in Anambra State. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select 100 respondents. In Stage I, all the five VCDP beneficiary LGAs in Anambra State were used. These include Anambra East, Anambra West, Awka North, Ayamelum and Orumba North LGAs. Stage 2 involved random selection of two town communities from each of the selected LGAs. This gave a total of 10 communities. Stage 3 involved selection of 10 participants each from the selected town communities using simple random sampling technique. This gave a total of 100 respondents that were used for the study. Data for the study were collected from primary source through the use of validated structured questionnaire.

Measurement of Variables

To determine level of youths' participation in the programme, the respondents were asked to indicate on a 4 point- Likert-type scale, the extent they participated in each of the various shortlisted programme activities in the area. Their response categories were: to a great extent (TGE) = 3; to some extent (TSE) = 2; to little extent (TLE) = 1 and to no extent (TNE) = 0. These values were added to obtain a value of 6 which was divided by 4 to get a mean score (M) of 1.5. The respondents' mean was obtained on each of the items. Any mean score ≥ 1.5 was regarded as active/high participation, while any mean score < 1.5 was regarded as a low participation.

To ascertain youths' benefits from participation in the programme, the respondents were asked to indicate in multiple responses the various benefits obtained for joining the VCDP. The respondent's percentage was obtained on each of the items. Any percentage $\geq 50 < 75$ was regarded as high benefit and any percentage ≥ 75 was regarded as very high benefit, while any percentage < 50 was regarded as low benefit.

To identify challenges of youths' participation in the programme the respondents were asked to indicate on a 3 point- Likert-type scale, how each of the various listed problems militates against effective youths' participation in the VCDP in the area. Their response categories were: very serious (VS) = 3; serious (S) = 2; and not serious (NS) = 1. These values were added to obtain a value of 6 which was divided by 3 to get a mean score of 2.0. The respondents' mean was obtained on each of the items. Any mean score ≥ 2.0 was regarded as a major challenge, while any mean score < 2.0 was regarded as a minor challenge.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) software Version 23 was used for data analysis. Data were analysed using frequency, percentage and mean and multiple linear regression analysis.

The multiple linear regression analysis to examine the relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of youths and their level of participation in the value chain development programme is given below as recommended by Akinbile (2014) [3] to determine relationship between a set of

independent variables and a dependent variable. The socio-economic factors of the respondents considered included age (AGE), marital status (MS), household size (HS), sex (SEX), educational level (EDU), annual income (INCOME), programme experience (PEXP), and membership of cooperative society (MCS).Then the multiple regression equation is given as follows:

$LP = a + b_1AGE + b_2MS + b_3HS + b_4SEX + b_5EDU + b_6INCOME + b_7PEXP + b_8MCS$

Where:

LP= level of participation in the value chain development programme

a = constant

b_1, b_2 …….. b_8 indicate the intercepts or coefficients of the independent variables.

AGE= age of the youth (measured in years)

MS = marital status (single = 1; married = 2; separated = 3; divorced = 4; widowed = 5)

HS = household size (measured by number of persons living in the household)

SEX = sex (male =1; female = 0)

EDU = level of education (measured in years of formal schooling)

INCOME = annual income (measured in Naira)

PEXP = programme experience (measured in years)

MCS = membership of cooperative society (Yes= 1, No =0)

Results and Discussion

Level of Youths' Participation in the Value Chain Development Programme Activities

Entries in Table 1 show that youths were highly involved in rice production (M=2.88), rice processing (M= 2.72), cassava production (M= 2.68), rice marketing (M= 2.05), cassava processing (M=1.86), cassava marketing (M=1.55) and water supply and irrigation schemes (M=1.51), but less involved in physical infrastructures such as land development (M=1.33) and road construction (M=1.22). These imply that youths are involved in both rice and cassava value chains but at varying degree of interest. The finding is in line with Olusola (2017) [19] who noted that desirable features of youth participation are provision for critical reflection on the participatory activity and the opportunity for group effort toward a common goal. The finding also agrees with Nwalieji et. al (2018) [18] who noted that the involvement of youth in the agricultural programmes and projects in the implementation level involve carrying out a number of project related activities. According to Aphunu and Atoma (2010)[8], agriculture has huge and diverse opportunities potentials that cannot only transform the national economy but also tremendously impact the personal lives of the farmers particularly the youths.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to level of participation in the value chain development programme activities

VCDP Activities	Mean (M)	S.D	Rank
Rice production	2.88*	0.307	1st
Rice processing	2.72*	0.445	2nd
Rice marketing	2.05*	0.624	4th
Cassava production	2.68*	0.468	3rd
Cassava processing	1.86*	0.667	5th
Cassava marketing	1.55*	0.690	6th
Physical infrastructures such as land development	1.33	0.742	8th
Water supply and irrigation schemes	1.51*	0.671	7th
Road construction	1.22	0.798	9th

*= M ≥ 1.50 = high participation; SD= standard deviation.

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Relationship between Socio-Economic Characteristics of Youths and their Level of Participation in the VCDP

Table 2 shows the result of regression analysis of the relationship between the independent variables (age, sex, educational level, household size, marital status, programme experience, membership of cooperative society and annual income) of youth beneficiaries and level of participation in VCDP activities in Anambra State. The result of the independent variables significantly influenced the dependent variables given R and R^2 of 0.643 and 0.557, respectively. These variables were able to explain 55.7% of the variation in youth participation in VCDP activities (R^2= 0.557). Out of the eight variables investigated, four (4) variables, age, educational level, programme experience (number of years spent in the programme) and annual income were found to be statistically significant at 5% level (P≤0.05), while sex, household size, marital status and membership of cooperative society were not significant.

Age of the respondents exerted positive and significant influence on extent of participation in VCDP activities. This implies that any increase in age leads to a corresponding increase in the participation in VCDP activities. Education level attained by youth showed a positive relationship with participation in VCDP activities. This implies that a unit increase in the level of education increases the probability of the participation in VCDP activities. Participants are more disposed to understand package introduced by the programme and other informants. This underlines the importance of human capital development in increasing the level of participation in VCDP activities. This agrees with Aniedu and Aniedu (2013) [7] who pointed that education is very essential in the development process.

Number of years spent in the programme by respondents significantly influenced their participation in the VCDP activities positively. This implies that the more experience a participant acquired in a programme, the higher the productivity and participation in the programme's activities. This is in line with the findings of Adesina and Eforuoku (2016) [2] which noted relationship between the selected socioeconomic characteristics and participation in Youth-in-Agriculture Programme (YAIP) that there was significant relationship between years of farming experience (r= 0.532 P≤0.05) and participation in YIAP. Annual

income realized from joining the VCDP had a positive and significant influence on their extent of participation in the programme's activities. This implies that the more income/gain realized by the participant, the higher their level of participation in the programme's activities. This agrees with Alinor (2002) [4] which noted that capital increases the scales of production and being enlarged, translates to more increase in output. However, Augustine, Angba and Paul (2012) [10] identified economic and social reasons as basic motivating factors for participation in social organizations.

Table 2: Regression output on the relationship between youths' socio-economic characteristics and level of participation in VCDP

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Variables	**B**	**SD Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig**
Constant	1.731	0.619	-	2.437*	0.020
Age	1.326	0.211	0.764	7.751*	0.000
Sex	-2.235	1.502	- 0.122	-1.194	0.236
Educational level	1.418	0.401	0.447	3.645*	0.014
Household size	0.163	1.532	0.044	0.116	0.612
Marital status	-2.162	1.648	-0.133	-1.208	0.905
No. of years spent in the programme	1.712	0.457	0.355	4.217*	0.008
Membership of cooperative society	0.113	1.434	0.027	0.036	0.376
Annual income	1.629	0.208	0.477	3.742*	0.050

*P≤0.05, R = 0.643, R^2 = 0.557, Adjusted R^2 = 0.418
Source: Field Survey, 2018

Youths' Perception of the Benefits for Participation in the VCDP

Table 3 shows that the respondents had very high benefits from the VCDP in the areas of increased access to improved rice/cassava varieties such as certified rice seeds/ cassava cuttings (100.0%), provision of agro-chemicals such as fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides (92.0%), increase in income (88.0%), provision of all-weather feeder roads (85.0%), adequate trainings on the improved technologies (85.0%), increase in yield (80.0%), and ease in marketing of produce (76.0%). Table 3 further reveals high benefits realized by youths from participating in the VCDP such as increased access to processing facilities such as machines and equipment (72.0%), increase in technical know-how (70.0%) among others. However, provision of storage facilities (35.0%), provision of fund for take-off (22.0%), and value addition (43.0%) were not benefited by the participants. The findings imply that the VCDP really benefited the participants immensely by providing them with increased access to improved rice/cassava varieties such as certified rice seeds/ cassava cuttings; agro-chemicals such as fertilizers; herbicides and insecticides; increase in income; all weather feeder roads; adequate trainings on the improved technologies; increase in yield; and ease in marketing of produce. The finding agrees with Adesina and Eforuoku (2016) [2] who observed that attitudes of participants towards Youth-in-Agriculture Programme (YAIP) was in favour of the statements that, YAIP could be a means of introducing new techniques and practices in crop production, help improve the income of youths and raise the production efficiency and productivity of the beneficiaries. Also, the finding agrees with Adekoya (2016) [1] who asserted that youth participation in agriculture is definitely the only means to reduce unemployment rate in Nigeria, and agriculture is no doubt a viable means of generating sustainable income in a developing nation like Nigeria.

Table 3: Distribution of youths according to benefits from participating in VCDP (n=100)

Benefits from VCDP	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Increased access to improved rice/cassava varieties such as certified rice seeds/ cassava cuttings	100	100.0**	Very high
Provision of agro-chemicals such as fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides	92	92.0**	Very high
Increased access to improved production technologies	68	68.0*	High
Increased access to processing facilities such as machines and equipment	72	72.0*	High
Improved processing and packaging technologies	54	54.0*	High
Provision of storage facilities	35	35.0	Low
Provision of all-weather feeder roads	85	85.0**	Very high
Provision of water supply and irrigation schemes/ facilities	55	55.0*	High
Strong linkage with service provider/ off-takers	52	52.0*	High
Provision of fund for take-off	22	22.0	Low
Increase in yield	80	80.0**	Very high
Increase in income	88	88.0**	Very high
Land development	65	65.0*	High
Value addition	43	43.0	Low
Increase in technical know-how	70	70.0*	High
Ease in marketing of produce	76	76.0**	Very high
Reduction of unemployment	57	57.0*	High
Adequate trainings on the improved technologies	85	85.0*	Very high

Multiple responses; *= % ≥ 50 < 75 =High benefits; ** = % ≥ 75 = Very high benefits
Source: Survey, 2018

Challenges of Effective Youths' Participation in the VCDP

Table 4 shows the mean distribution of identified challenges of effective youths' participation in the VCDP in the study area. The results reveal that the major challenges included late/ untimely distribution of inputs (M=2.84), difficulty in payment of counterpart fund (M=2.76), poor monitoring and evaluation (M=2.68), high cost of production (M=2.66), fluctuation in prices of products (M=2.57), corruption and materialism among staff (M=2.56), poor Buy Back Scheme (BBS)/ Off-taker implementation (M=2.52), lack of involvement at planning and introduction stages (M=2.40) among others. However, poor extension advisory services (M=1.80), inadequate training opportunities (M=1.77), poor awareness creation (M=1.52), and low yield and income (M=1.28) were minor challenges faced by the respondents. The findings imply that the programme is being faced with numerous challenges, although it made some remarkable positive effects on the lives of beneficiaries.

The findings agree with Onuekwusi (2005) [20] who noted that lack of infrastructure and essential input hinder youth's participation in agricultural and rural development activities. This may be due to inadequate or lack of continuous funding by government; followed by, inadequate credit facilities. The findings are also in line with Nwalieji *et al* (2018) [18] who identified major challenges of youth involvement to include lack of involvement at planning and introduction stages, poor access to land and other farm inputs, politics and inadequate information about the existence of the programmes. Kgoisiamang and Oladele (2012) [13] noted that major constraints that affect farmers participation in agricultural projects were unavailability of land, insufficiency of fund to farm productivity, insufficiency to technical knowledge, high input costs, insufficiency of commitment by extension agent, insufficiency of leadership skills, insufficiency of sense of ownership, and farmers' under development or insufficiency in farms infrastructure and human resources. The YISA (2013) [22] concluded that the youths want white-collar jobs, thereby neglecting agriculture which is the basic thing. They believe that agricultural production is only for the adults. In addition, McLean (2020) [15] recalled that these young people lack educational access and credentials and need multiple income-generating activities in order to survive.

Table 4: Distribution of challenges of effective participation of the youths in the VCDP according to mean scores

Challenges	Mean (M)	SD	Rank
Inadequate supply of inputs	2.23*	0.699	11th
Late/ untimely distribution of inputs	2.84*	0.415	1st
Difficulty in payment of counterpart fund	2.76*	0.452	2nd
Poor extension advisory services	1.80	0.733	13th
Poor Buy Back Scheme (BBS)/ Off-taker implementation	2.52*	0.538	7th
High cost of production	2.66*	0.522	4th
VCDP not youth-driven programme	2.15*	0.618	12th
Lack of involvement at planning and introduction stages	2.40*	0.545	8th
Lack of interest in agriculture but preference to white collar job	2.35*	0.588	9th
Poor awareness creation	1.52	0.761	15th
Inadequate training opportunities	1.77	0.602	14th
Poor monitoring and evaluation	2.68*	0.423	3rd
Poor need assessment	2.33*	0.578	10th
Corruption and materialism among staff	2.56*	0.500	6th
Low yield and income	1.28	0.801	16th
Fluctuation in prices of products	2.57*	0.422	5th

*= M ≥ 2.00 = major challenge; SD= standard deviation

Source: Survey, 2018

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Youths benefited immensely and participated actively in activities of the Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) in Anambra State, but challenges abound that militate against effective youths' involvement in the programme. The urgent attention to tackle these challenges would boost the interest of youths to take agriculture as lucrative and quick- yielding business venture/ enterprise for food security and poverty reduction toward national development.

Recommendations

1. Since late/ untimely distribution of inputs was the prominent challenges, there should be timely (before the farming season kicks off) and adequate supply of agro-inputs and credits at subsidized rate by the service providers. This will address issues on delays in credit/agro-input disbursement and in the approval of work plans, budgets and procurements. This would encourage farmers start field operations timely.
2. Government should create an initiative to improve the opportunities for young people to take part in agricultural work in order to provide larger benefits/ dividend.
3. Planning, monitoring, supervision and evaluation aspect of the programme should be taken seriously by the programme management in which the beneficiaries should be involved from onset. This will serve as a check against corrupt practices among staff and beneficiaries.
4. Buy Back Scheme (BBS)/ Off-taker aspect of the programme should be well-implemented in order to strengthen linkages among the actors and as well encourage massive participation of the beneficiaries.

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