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BENEFICIARY PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER SPECIFIC EXTENSION DELIVERY SERVICE IN AKWA IBOM, NIGERIA

AKPABIO, INIOBONG ANIEFIOK
Agricultural Economics and Extension Department
University of Uyo, P.M.B. 1017, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
E-mail: dr_akpabio@yahoo.com

Abstract
Women play major roles in agricultural production although only an estimated 5 percent actually benefit from mainstream extension activities. The Gender Specific Extension Delivery Service was instituted to remedy this trend. This study was an attempt to document women beneficiaries' perceptions on the effectiveness of the extension outreach mechanism. Findings reveal an overall positive beneficiary perception. Analyses however reveal a number of institutional limitations which require remedial action for increased effectiveness. Recommendations are proffered in this light.

Keywords: Gender, Extension delivery, Perception, Akwa Ibom, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria's rural women play multiple roles in agricultural production as they are mainly responsive for the bulk of activities associated with food production, processing, storage and marketing. Inspite of these immense and laudable contributions to societal, economic and nutritional well-being, women had been neglected by the agricultural extension services, as only an estimated 5 percent world wide had benefited from extension services (FAO, 2000).

Agricultural extension services in Nigeria is located within the ambit of the agricultural development projects (ADPs). The general goal of the ADPs is to increase the agricultural productivity and consequent income of small scale farmers. Female farmers however have additional responsibilities, with respect to ensuring proper handling of harvested crops. In order to ameliorate these problems, the National Council on Agriculture in 1989 evolved an agricultural policy which among others, was aimed at addressing gender specific

agricultural problems with respect to food nutrition, processing, storage and utilization of crop and livestock produce; in order to raise women's income and living standards through business oriented farming and processing strategies. This process led to the establishment of the Women –In – Agriculture (WIA) sub-component of the of the ADPs which utilise a new extension delivery procedure entitled. The "Gender Specific Extension Delivery Service (GSEDS)" This extension delivery procedure expands the scope of extension activities to cover both on-farm and off-farm activities of women farmers and the ultimate goal is to ensure that agricultural information targets women farmers in the short run, so as to include them in the mainstream of agricultural development in the long run. The GSEDS operates with the aid of qualified and well-trained female extension agents who liaise with women groups to identify and register their production problems, as well as provide relevant interventions. The agent is expected to cover about 8 women groups in each cell and is expected to interact with each group on a fortnightly basis.

Recent literature on women roles in development have traversed technical and socio-economic aspects and have been enlarged to include cultural and psychological issues bordering on how women react to innovation and on how it affects them. Brown, D; M. Howes, K. Hussein, C. Longley and K. Swindell. (2002) asserts that "How" knowledge is gained through research into cognition, perception and classification. Boster (1985) regards perception, with reference to participation in agricultural development, as a visual process which takes place prior to and independently of any assessment regarding the utility of a particular participatory approach. In essence farmers' perceptions are influenced by how satisfied they feel with their experiences (which include quality of personal interaction, compatibility and socio-economic standing of the participants) and the clarity and relevance of the message.

The Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development Programme (AKADEP) came into existence in 1987, after Akwa Ibom was created out of Cross River State but became fully operationalised in 1991. It has fully embraced the GSEDS and by 2001 had a total number of 40 female extension agents responsible for providing extension services to 274 women groups throughout the State (AKADEP, 2002). Ever since the introduction of the GSEDS in the State and with the current emphasis on participatory extension, no effort has been made to elicit the perception of GSEDS clientele on the operational procedures and benefits accruing thereof. It therefore becomes

pertinent to document the views and feelings of the female clientele on the suitability, effectiveness and overall importance of the GSEDS; to the enhancement of their socio-economic status. The study therefore attempted to ascertain the perception of GSEDS clientele in Akwa Ibom State, on the activities and mode of operation of the extension delivery system. The study also attempted to determine the existence of a significant relationship in the perception of four sets of women clientele, about the effectiveness of the GSEDS in the study area.

Methods

A pretested and validated structured interview schedule and In-depth Interview sessions (IDIs) were utilised to elicit relevant information from 206 respondents selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure, from the 274 registered WIA groups in the State (viz; Table 1). Collated data was analysed through descriptive (frequency, mean, rank) and inferential (Kendal's Coefficient Concordance) procedures.

Beneficiary perception was measured through a request to respondents to respond to a 4-point likert continuum of: Very Ineffective (1); Ineffective (2); Effective (3) and Very Effective (4); with regards to their perceptions of the effectiveness of 19 identified operational activities of the GSEDS. Any activity with a mean score of 2.5 (1 + 2 + 3 +4/4) and above, was perceived as effective; while a mean score of less than 2.5 depicted a non-effective activity. Ranking was also performed in a decreasing order of effectiveness, where an activity with the highest mean score was assigned the highest rank (1).

Table 1: Number of WIA groups and sampling procedure

S/No	Zones	Blocks	Cells/Groups	Sample size
1	Abak	9	59	59
2	Eket	7	40	-
3	Etinan	4	28	-
4	Ikot Ekpene*	8	63	63
5	Oron*	4	23	23
6	Uyo*	8	61	61
		40	274	206

* Selected agricultural zones
Source: AKADEP (2002)

Results and Discussion

Perceptions of Effectiveness of the GSEDS. Table 2 reveals that 13 of the 19 identified GSEDS activities were regarded as effectively performed. The 3 most effective (highest ranked) activities were revealed to be (i) training on management of small scale agricultural enterprises (rank = 1.5; mean (x) = 3.97); (ii) dissemination of post-harvest technologies in the crop and non-crop subsectors (rank = 1.5; x = 3.97) and; (iii) regular fortnight visits of extension agents to farmer groups (rank = 3; x = 3.42). The revelation that respondents were quite enthusiastic about being trained in the management of small scale agricultural enterprises is in consonance with a related finding in the course of study which revealed that only 30% respondents involved in the GSEDS regarded farming as a primary occupation. It is also indicative of respondents' interest in diversifying from primary agricultural production because of its remunerative status. This situation had led Berdegue and Escobaar (2002) to assert that agriculture is not the best avenue for reducing income poverty for poor rural households. This situation accounts for the women's desire to acquire information on available post-harvest technologies, ostensibly to help take care of excess crop harvests from their farms. It is expected that this would help reduce spoilage and consequent haste to sell off excess produce at low prices – a process which ultimately acts as a disincentive to large-scale production. It was also revealed that female extension agents were very effective and focused in duty performance, as respondents actually affirmed that the agents observed the mandatory regular fortnight visits to farmer groups.

Table 2 also reveals the low levels of attitudinal ranking for the three important pro-women GSEDS activities. These are: development of technologies targeted at women farmers (rank no. 13); provision of solutions to identified problems of women farmers (rank no. 14) and linkage of women groups with national and international agencies (rank no. 15). These findings are in tandem with Mosse's (1993) submission about the poor representation of women's perspectives in most extension

Table 2: Respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Gender Specific Extension Delivery Service in Akwa Ibom, Nigeria

	Activities and Modes of operation	Effectiveness							
		VE (4)	E (3)	I (2)	VI (1)	Attitude score	Mean	Rank	Remarks
		F	F	F	F				
1*	Restructuring the research agenda to meet the need of women farmers	63 (30.58)*	56 (27.19)*	50 (24.27)*	37 (17.96)*	557	2.70	10	A
2	Use of participatory research to address women farmers' constraints	96 (46.60)	41 (19.90)	36 (17.48)	33 (16.02)	612	2.97	7	A
3	Development of women oriented technologies	27 (13.11)	64 (31.07)	79 (38.35)	36 (17.48)	494	2.40	13	A
4	Provision of solution to identified problems of women farmers	16 (7.77)	61 (29.61)	87 (42.23)	42 (20.39)	363	1.76	14	D
5	Registration of women farmer groups into cooperatives	73 (35.44)	79 (38.35)	50 (24.27)	4 (1.94)	633	3.07	5	A
6	Identification of relevant Adaptive Non-farm technologies (ANTs)	63 (30.58)	68 (33.01)	39 (18.93)	36 (17.48)	570	2.77	9	A
7	Use of women contact farmers to coordinate women	109 (52.91)	56 (27.19)	20 (9.71)	21 (10.19)	665	3.23	4	A
8	Provision of processing machines at subsidised rate	-	-	10 (4.85)	196 (95.16)	216	1.05	18	D
9	Training on vitamin A and iodine deficiency control	-	-	4 (1.94)	202 (98.06)	210	1.02	19	D
10	Training on management of small scale agro-enterprises	200 (97.06)	6 (2.91)	-	-	818	3.97	1.5	A
11	Linkage with financial institutions for loan acquisition	13 (6.31)	98 (47.57)	90 (43.69)	5 (2.43)	531	2.58	12	A
12	Exposure to modern farming and processing methods	-	8 (3.88)	106 (59.97)	92 (44.66)	328	1.59	16	D
13	Linkage of women with national and international agencies	3 (1.46)	17 (8.25)	105 (51.46)	81 (39.32)	354	1.72	15	D
14	Seminar and advocacy workshops on household food security	75 (36.41)	10 (4.85)	97 (50.97)	24 (11.65)	548	2.66	11	A
15	Organisation of study tours by blocks extension officers	-	4 (1.94)	106 (47.09)	96 (46.60)	220	1.07	17	D
16	Regular visit (fortnight) to 80-100 contact farmers in each block	100 (48.54)	93 (45.15)	13 (6.31)	-	705	3.42	3	A
17	Report of farmers reaction to recommended technologies	64 (31.07)	73 (35.44)	69 (33.49)	-	613	2.98	6	A
18	Dissemination of post harvest technologies in the crop and non-crop sub-sectors	200 (97.08)	6 (2.91)	-	-	818	3.97	1.5	A
19	Introduction of labour saving devices in agro-processing	39 (18.93)	114 (55.35)	41 (19.90)	12 (5.83)	592	2.87	8	A

Source: Field survey (2003)

Key: VE = Very Effective E = Effective I = Ineffective VI = Very Ineffective

* Percentages in Parentheses

Table 3: Kendall's rank correlation analysis of perceptions by four sets of respondents

/N	Activities and Modes of operation	Abak: rank	Ikot Ekpene: rank	Uyo: rank	Oron: rank	Total rank Rj	D=(Rj-R)²
	Restructuring the research agenda to meet the need of women farmers	12	9	9	5.5	35.5	20.25
	Use of participatory research to address women farmers' constraints	6	3.5	12	7	28.5	132.25
	Development of women oriented technologies	13	12	13	10	48.0	64.00
	Provision of solution to identified problems of women farmers	14	14	14	5.5	47.5	56.25
	Registration of women farmer groups into cooperatives	5	7	5	8.5	25.5	210.25
	Identification of relevant Adaptive Non-farm technologies (ANTs)	10	10	8	2	30.00	100.00
	Use of women contact farmers to coordinate women	4	5	4	8.5	21.5	342.25
	Provision of processing machines at subsidised rate	18.5	18	18	17	71.5	992.25
	Training on vitamin A and iodine deficiency control	18.5	19	19	19	75.5	1,260.25
0	Training on management of small scale agro-enterprises	1.5	2	1.5	1	6.0	1,156.00
1	Linkage with financial institutions for loan acquisition	11	13	11	12.5	47.5	56.25
2	Exposure to modern farming and processing methods	16	15	16	17	64.0	576.00
3	Linkage of women with national and international agencies	15	16	15	15	61.0	441.00
4	Seminar and advocacy workshops on household food security	17	17	17	17	68.0	784.00
5	Organisation of study tours by blocks extension officers	9	11	10	12.5	42.5	6.25
6	Regular visit (fortnight) to 80-100 contact farmers in each block	3	3.5	3	3	12.5	756.25
7	Report of farmers reaction to recommended technologies	7	6	6	4	23.0	289.00
8	Dissemination of post harvest technologies in the crop and non-crop sub-sectors	1.5	1	1.5	14	18.0	484.00
9	Introduction of labour saving devices in agro-processing	8	8	7	11	34.0	36.00
						$\Sigma R_j = 760$	$\Sigma D = 7,762.5$

Source: Field survey (2003)

N = 19 k = 4 R = 40 W = 0.42

Using $W = \frac{12D}{K^2N^3 - N}$ where W = Kendall's rank correlation coefficient

K = Numbers of sets of rankings = 4

N = Number of entities being ranked = 19

D = Sum of squares of observed deviation from rank mean (R). This is to test the relationship among more than 2 sets of ranking

$D = (R_j - R)_2 = 7762.5$

R_j = Sum of ranks assigned to each item by farmers.

ΣR_j = Total sum of ranks across all ranked items = 760

R = Mean ranking: $\frac{\Sigma R_j}{N} = \frac{760}{19} = 40$

programmes. This trend ultimately translates over time, to reduced interest and discontinuous involvement in extension activities.

Analysis of perception for four sets of women respondents: Results on Table 3 reveal that there was about a 42% level of agreement by the 4 sets of respondents on their assessment about the effectiveness of the GSEDS of the AKADEP. A test of significance also revealed that the computed chi-square (X^2) value of 30.24 exceeds the tabulated value of 28.87%; hence asserting the validity of the alternate hypothesis that farmer's set of rankings are related. This result echoes Pangare's (1998) submission that women farmers have independent views about farming and other activities of interest to them and can contribute significantly to the improvement of activities in which they are involved. The relatively low level of agreement is reflective of the fact that the GSEDS still leaves a lot to be desired in terms of contribution to the upliftment of women's economic and socio-psychological status. A congruence of respondents' very low ranking of three activities on Table 2, viz; poor linkage with national and international agencies (rank no. 15); non-exposure to modern processing and storage methods (rank no. 16) and lack of study tours (rank no. 17); further exposes the inadequacies of the GSEDS and also confirms that women actually do understand their felt needs and are also apprised of envisaged

solutions. In-depth interviews however revealed that the extension agents do actually broach these topics during interaction with the farmer groups but are constrained in implementation. Hall and Nahdy (1999) have blamed these gross inadequacies on lack of time and resources. Brown, D; M. Howes, K. Hussein, C. Longley and K. Swindell. 2002 are not impressed by this argument and are quick to draw attention to the problems inherent in any development process which is controlled by "an institutional architecture limited by time and resources". Hagmann, J., E. Churma, K. Murwira and M. Conolly (1999) also point out that teaching of external knowledge and technologies is insufficient if knowledge taught is not directly applied and tried out by farmers themselves. The resultant effect of these grave omissions are: lack of clarity, lack of awareness of relevance, and open ended development; all of which negatively affect perception, resulting to poor participation and low probability of adoption (Davidson, A; M. Ahmad and T. Ali 2001).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The modern trend of integrating women into mainstream agricultural extension activities and programmes is vested on the need to meet productivity goals, improve subsistence agriculture to enhance family (and national) well being and to reduce negative impacts of development efforts on the women folk, who are always worse hit by unintended consequences. Findings from this study reveal that GSEDS beneficiaries have an overall positive perception about the effectiveness of the extension delivery system. Analyses however reveal some institutional defects which if well considered and ameliorated will definitely enhance the process of integrating gender into development programmes. It is important however to note the following recommendations: Gender mainstreaming is a process of education, research and action (Fakih, 2003) and for sustainability, must be backed by political will. Relevant authorities must therefore be willing to allocate adequate resources (time, money, materials) to ensure success and enhanced entrenchment of participatory orientation in extension agents and institutional mechanisms.

Linkage of women groups with national and international agencies will enhance various latent capacities in these ad-hoc groups and which will broaden their scope of development beyond agricultural production. Through linkage and capacity building programme, these groups will be able to mobilise local resources and also acquire

the voice and capacity to negotiate with external entities, for supplemental resources in aid of sustainable development.

Look and learn tours to relevant facilities and innovative sites will facilitate sharing of knowledge and skills among farmers and with researchers, extensionists; and facilitate adaptation of technologies to suit local conditions.

Finally, to facilitate the development of technologies suited to women clientele, the formation of Gender Field schools is advocated. These schools are expected to focus on actual incidences of gender injustice and seek to inventorise the social and political factors underlying gender inequality. A resultant effect would be the collation and dissemination gender views, which can be espoused through rejuvenated stronger social groups which with their enhanced bargaining power and beneficial linkages, will take steps towards effective gender mainstreaming, for sustainable development.

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