

PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF STATE EMPLOYMENT FOR RESULT (SEEFOR) PROJECT ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN DELTA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the perceived effects of State Employment for Result Project implemented by Fadama on socio-economic status of women and community development in Delta State of Nigeria. It identified the infrastructural project provided; ascertained the level of rural women participation and determined perceived effects of the project on the socioeconomic status of women in the study area. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 170 beneficiaries. Questionnaire and personal interviews were used to elicit data from the respondents. Descriptive statistical tools such as mean, percentage, pie chart, Likert scale and inferential statistics such Pearson product-moment correlation was used to present and analyse data collected. The results revealed that the mean age of the women participants was 45 years; 87.3% were married; 64.3% had one form of education or the other. A mean household size of 6 persons, 91.6% had farming as a major occupation; 95% had a small enterprise size and a mean monthly income of N31,818.62. The types of rural infrastructure provided by the project were boats, market stalls, feeder roads, curvets, water among others. The level of participation of the rural women was low (1.60). The perceived effects of the project on women's socio-economic status and community development were; improvement in the contribution of children's education/community development (3.31); increased agricultural production (3.29) among others. The study concludes that the project has relatively affected the socio-economic status of women and community development in Delta State. Based on the findings it was recommended that the government, intervention agencies should work closely with rural women to enable them participate fully in all stages of any developmental projects.

Keywords: Perceived Effects, SEEFOR Project, Socio-Economic Status, Women, Community Development

INTRODUCTION

Poverty, inequality within societies, and not involving some groups of society in social decision-making processes is a teething issue in the world and Nigeria inclusive. To overcome poverty, nations of the world unanimously put the 'No Poverty' goal as the first goal of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targeted at transforming the world (Liu *et al*, 2015). It was on this ground that, government at all levels including the private sector has continued to show commitment by increasing basic resources and services to alleviate poverty on the most vulnerable groups in the society which include women and children and supporting communities affected by conflict and climate-related disasters (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2018; 2004); African Development Bank (ADB) 2010). Poverty is a socio-economic condition of lack that erodes the human right of the affected people irrespective of gender hence subjecting the individual to a condition of powerlessness and lacking self-esteem (UNDP 2006 in Bello, 2016). It is not only a state of existence

but also a process with various degrees and complexities.

In Nigeria, the poverty level is on the increase particularly in the rural areas (Federal Office of Statistics 1999 in Isife *et. al* 2013), where women form the majority of the population as most of the men have migrated to the cities in search of a white-collar leaving the women and children to contend with a poor living condition. Oluwatoyin (2013), asserts that poverty in Nigeria is on the increase and that women make up a higher percentage of the population below the poverty line and are most of the times in conditions of extreme poverty, given the harsh relatives of intra-household and social discrimination. In confirmation, Cuaresma *et al* (2018) noted that people, most especially women in rural areas, continue to live in extreme poverty and serious deprivation often exacerbated by violent conflicts and vulnerability to disasters. According to the World Bank (2002), there is an increase in the number of women below the poverty line since the 1990s compared to the figure for men. As a result, households headed by women are

often the most chronically poor groups within the societies (Vargas- Lundius and Ypeij, 2012; Federal Republic of Nigeria 2020). Albert (2013) and Albert and Deekor (2014) reported that more than two-third of the Nigerian population lives in the rural areas, and they experience a lot of misery, poverty, morbidity, and underdevelopment. They describe poverty situation at individual level in the rural area to include inability to feed oneself sufficiently, physical insecurity, inadequate assets, ignorance, incapability to afford basic necessities to meet social and economic needs and the powerlessness to improve one's situations.

The roles of rural women cannot be overemphasized as they play a vital part in assisting their households and communities in achieving food and nutrition security, generating income, and improving rural livelihoods and overall well-being. To cushion the effects of poverty among women in rural areas in Nigeria, several poverty alleviation strategies have been initiated by government such as Poverty Eradication Program (PAPNati) (2000); National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) (2001), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) (2003); National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy NEEDS (2004); Seven-Point Agenda (2009); Nigeria Vision 2020 (2009); Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) and the Federal and State governments in collaboration with the World Bank embarked on Fadama project. The Fadama project was carried out in phases; 1, 11, and 111. Due to the effective performance of Fadama III project in rural development approach among the participating States (Ike, 2016), the State Employment and Expenditure for Result (SEEFOR) engaged Fadama III to carry out one of its components, Community Driven Development (CDD), Economic (the agricultural sector for rural development in four states of the Niger Delta (World Bank, 2012). SEEFOR project is being implemented in four states of the Niger Delta including Bayelsa, Edo, Delta and Rivers. The project was funded by World Bank, European Union, the participating states and the beneficiaries' contribution (World Bank, 2012). The main objectives of the project were enhancing opportunities for employment and access to socio-economic services whilst improving the public financial management systems in participating states. The project is designed to support the three pillars of Nigeria's country partnership strategy hinged on good governance, maintaining non-oil growth, and human development. The project had three components; (a) Youth Employment and Access to Socio-economic Services, (b) Public Financial Management Reforms, and (c) Project Coordination and Implementation Support (World Bank, 2012). Component A support three main activity areas: (i) carrying out of small public works and institutional strengthening to generate

youth employment in urban areas; (ii) carrying out technical, vocational and agricultural training by providing grants to existing public technical, vocational and agricultural training institutions and capacity building support to State ministries responsible for education and agriculture; and (iii) carrying out of eligible Community Development subprojects by providing grants to (a) Fadama Community Associations (FCAs) and (b) Community Service Development Association Services (CSDAs) (or responsible agencies in Delta and Rivers). The other components also have their sub-components but this work will only concentrate on component A and sub-component 3: Carrying out eligible Community Development subprojects by providing grants to FCAs in Delta (World Bank, 2012). The SEEFOR project has been in existence for the past seven (7) years, it is an empowerment programme to alleviate poverty among rural people including women have benefited from the project hence it will be necessary to assess the extent at which the activities of SEEFOR have helped in on the socio-economic status of women and community development in Delta State of Nigeria.

SEEFOR through Fadama (a Hausa word for low-land agriculture projects) has carried out subprojects such as rehabilitation and construction of feeder and access roads, culverts, and small bridges; rural markets, infrastructure for sustainable natural resource management, including improved conservation of soils and agronomic practices, water harvesting techniques, improved agricultural technology including productive assets for the different farm enterprise and providing matching grants to least 20%; at least 50% of the selected community-owned infrastructure and assets are operating satisfactorily and are maintained satisfactorily (World Bank 2012). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceived effects of State Employment for Result Project implemented by Fadama on the socio-economic status of women and community development in Delta State.

There is scanty research in this important area to provide current and reliable data for informed policymaking on means of improving the living standard of rural women in Nigeria particularly Delta and other developing nations.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of this study include:

- i identify the infrastructural project provided by SEEFOR;
- ii ascertain the level of rural women participation in the SEEFOR project; and
- iii ascertain the perceived effects of SEEFOR project on the socio-economic status of women and community development in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The study area was Delta State of the Niger Delta region. The state was created in 1991 and covers a landmass of about 18,050 km² of which more than 60% is an island. The state has a population of 4,098,391 composed of 2,074,306 males and 2,024,085 females (National Population Commission, 2006). Delta State lies roughly between longitudes 5°00' And 6°45' East and Latitude 5°00' and 6°30'

North; It is bounded in the North by Edo State, in the East by Anambra State; in the South-East by Bayelsa State and in the southern flank by Bight of Benin which covers approximately 160 km of the State's coastline (Okoedo-Okojie and Osabuohien 2016). Delta state is generally low-lying without remarkable hills. The state has a wide coastal belt inter-laced with rivulets and streams which form part of the Niger-Delta.

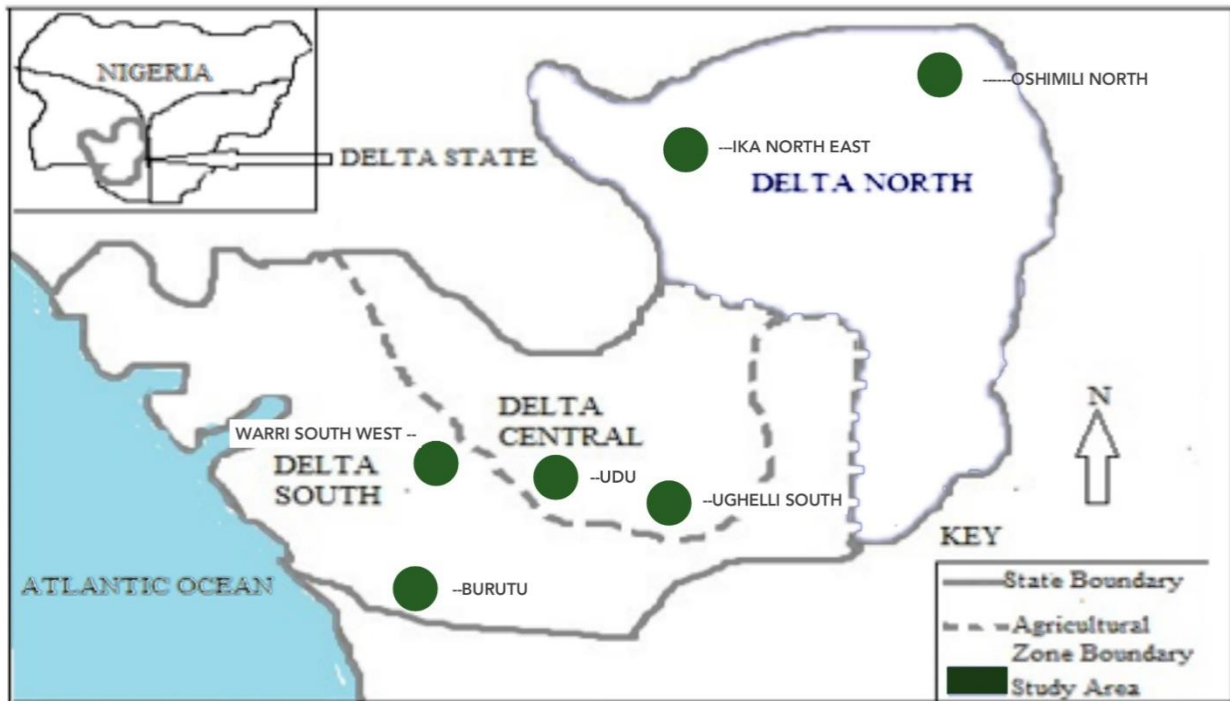


Fig 1: Map of Delta State Showing Study Area

Ike (2011) described the climate of Delta State as a tropical climate marked by two distinctive seasons; the dry and rainy or wet seasons: the dry season occurs between November and April, while the rainy season begins in May and lasts till October. Occasional rainfall may be experienced during the dry season. The month of July witnesses the heaviest rainfall. The major occupation of the people is farming and fishing. They are also into off-farm activities like mason, craftwork and trading. It is made up of 25 local government areas which are divided into three agricultural zones of Delta North (Aniocha North, Aniocha South, Ndokwa East, Ndokwa West, Oshimili North, Oshimili South, Ukwuani, Ika North-East and Ika South), Delta South (Ethiope East, Ethiope West, Okpe, Sapele, Udu, Uvwie, Ughelli South and Ughelli North) and Delta Central (Burutu, Bomadi, Warri South, Warri North, Isoko North, Warri South East, Isoko South and Patani) (Delta State Agricultural Development Programme, 2000). A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed to get the sample for the study. First, the State was stratified into agricultural zones. Secondly, two LGAs each were purposely selected from each agricultural zone to give twelve (12) LGAs because of the

prominence of the activities of SEEFOR. The selected LGAs that participated in the project are Udu, Bomadi, Warri South, Warri South East, Burutu, Ika North East, Oshimili North, Oshimili South, Ethiope East, Ughelli South, Ughelli North and Okpe. Furthermore, ten (10) Fadama communities were selected because some of the LGAs do not have up to two communities that benefitted from the project. Finally, a proportionate stratified random procedure was employed to choose (170) women respondents for the study. Data for the study was generated from primary sources using questionnaire and personal interviews. To achieve the objectives of this study and test the research hypotheses, the data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentage, mean scores, standard deviation (S.D), and Likert scale were used to describe the data and present them in tables and charts. For inferential statistical, like the Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to look at the relationship between level of participation and perceived effect SEEFOR project

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of Rural Infrastructure Provided by SEEFOR in Delta State

The result in Fig 2 showed that a good percentage (41%) of the infrastructures provided were cargo boats. Other infrastructures provided were markets stall (29%), water (19%) and waste disposal (11%). Health facilities, educational facilities, toilets, curvets, feeder road, oil palm processing plant and electrification were not part of the rural infrastructure provided in Delta state. The provision of cargo boat will go a long way to assist the rural women

particularly those in the riverine areas to convey their farm produce to the market instead of selling at a farmgate price where the buyer most times determine the price which might not be in favor of the rural women. Olorunfemi and Adenigbo (2017) asserts that lack of rural infrastructure particularly as it affects transportation, has limited the level of agricultural activities as most farmers find it difficult to transport their agricultural products to the where it will be needed. The provision of cargo boats will help to deduce post-harvest losses which usually affect farmers' income negatively.

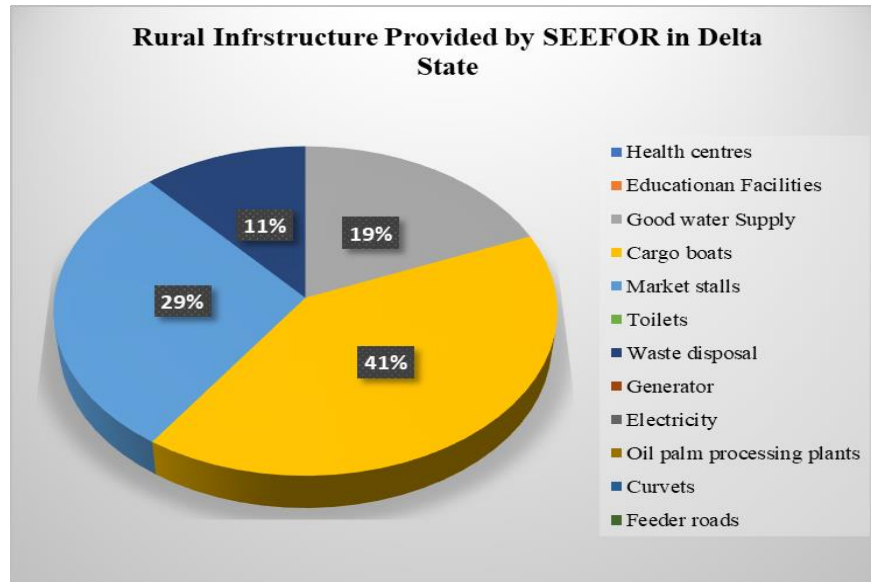


Fig 2: Types of Rural Infrastructure Provided by SEEFOR in Delta State

Rural Women's Level of Participation in SEEFOR Project in Delta State

In Delta state, rural women's participation in the different stages of SEEFOR project was low as the mean on the level of participation for all variables listed was less than (2.00) which was the decision mean (Table 1). Needs assessment (1.75), priority setting (1.72) project identification (1.60), programme planning (1.69); programme preparation (consultation with technical /professionals (1.32), the decision on the scope of sub-project to take up (1.55), counterpart contribution (1.68); programme implementation (involvement in community meetings on micro-projects (1.70), labour contribution at micro-project site (1.67), financial contribution (1.62), implementation decision-making process

(1.58) and program monitoring and evaluation (periodic monitoring (1.52), part of project progress, reporting (1.46), corrective intervention (1.41), problem-solving (1.47) were all below the decision rule of 2.00 and therefore considered low participation. The low participation in the different stages of the project suggests that the intervention agency and programme planners took decisions about the project without due consultation of the rural women in Delta State. This contradicts the view of Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) that the people should be involved in need assessment, planning, implementation, utilization, and assessment of development projects to improve women's socio-economic condition.

Table 1: Mean Distribution of the Rural Women According to Level of Participation in SEEFOR Project in Delta State

Stages in the project	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	TOTAL	MEAN	Remark
Needs assessment	31	61	73	288.00	1.74	LP
Priority setting	33	54	78	285.00	1.72	LP
Project identification	32	36	97	265.00	1.60	LP
Program planning	33	49	83	280.00	1.69	LP
Consultation with technical/professionals	5	42	118	217.00	1.31	LP
Decision of scope of sub-project to take up	14	63	88	256.00	1.55	LP
Counterpart contribution	26	60	79	277.00	1.67	LP
Involvement in community meetings	28	59	78	280.00	1.69	LP
Labour contribution	24	62	79	275.00	1.66	LP
Financial contribution	19	65	81	268.00	1.62	LP
Implementation - Decision making process	15	66	84	261.00	1.58	LP
Program monitoring and evaluation - Periodic monitoring	9	68	88	251.00	1.52	LP
Program monitoring and evaluation – Reporting	6	63	96	240.00	1.45	LP
Program monitoring and evaluation - Corrective intervention	6	57	102	234.00	1.41	LP
Program monitoring and evaluation - Problem solving	7	64	94	243.00	1.47	LP
Grand Mean					1.60	

<2.00 = Low participation (LP)

≥ 2.00 High Participation (HP)

Source: Field Survey 2021.

Effect of SEEFOR Project on the Socio-economic Status of Rural Women and Community Development in Delta State

The results in Table 2 showed the effect of rural women participating in SEEFOR project in Delta State. The grand mean for the perceived effect of SEEFOR project on the socio-economic status of rural women and community development of Delta State was 2.91 indicating that the project had less effect in improving the socio-economic status of the rural women and community development in Delta State as the decision mean was 3.00. Although the respondents agreed that participating in the project had improved their ability to contribute financially to children's education/community development projects (3.31); enabled income sources diversification (3.31); increased agricultural production (3.29); increased income level tremendously (3.16); helped in the

acquisition of leadership skills (3.11) and enabled increased savings (3.09). The implication of this is that effort of SEEFOR intervention was not enough in Delta State, even though the interventions were meant to increase agricultural productivity and improve the socio-economic condition of rural women. However, women still have not had some vital aspects of their living conditions enhanced as the intervention was less effective in the following vital areas; employment, acquisition of property, reduction of child labour, reduced women workload eg fetching of water from far distance or river, stream, good water supply, health, decision making in the community, improved housing. This work supports the claim of Albert and Igbokwe (2014) and Onowu *et al* (2014) that the impacts of rural development had not been felt much by rural people.

Table 2: Mean Distribution of Effect of SEEFOR Project on the Socio-economic Status of Rural Women and Community Development in Delta State

Variables	Very great effect	Great Effect	Moderately Effective	Less Effective	Not Effective	Total	Mean	SD
Income level has increased tremendously	7	81	38	7	32	519	3.16	1.2
Increase volume of business	5	80	29	18	33	501	3.03	1.2
Enabled income sources diversification	3	86	44	24	8	547	3.31	0.9
Increase in agricultural production	2	89	39	25	10	543	3.29	0.9
Improved efficiency in processing and storage	0	73	42	30	20	498	3.01	1.1
Improved access to agricultural input	2	72	34	39	18	496	3.00	1.2
Improved household food and nutrition security	2	72	34	39	18	496	3.00	1.26
Improved housing	0	70	21	29	45	446	2.70	1.3
Partaking in decision making in the community	66	29	29	26	44	447	2.70	1.2
Greater self-employment	4	70	28	38	25	485	2.94	1.2
Enhanced educational opportunity	0	46	39	23	57	404	2.45	1.2
Increased decision-making power at home	40	41	40	16	28	544	3.30	1.4
Improvement in contributing financially to children's education/community development	41	42	30	30	22	545	3.31	1.4
Less dependence on tradition/superstition	1	17	87	23	37	417	2.53	0.9
Reduced rural-urban migration	6	13	87	36	23	438	2.66	0.9
Less Child labour	1	67	33	33	31	469	2.84	1.2
Acquisition of leadership skills	6	73	34	38	14	514	3.11	1.1
Enhanced access to health facilities	1	68	23	39	34	458	2.77	1.2
The programme reduced women workload fetching of water from far distance or river, stream, etc	2	70	32	20	41	467	2.83	1.3
Enabled increased savings	1	72	47	31	14	510	3.09	1
Increase in the acquisition of property	0	34	62	31	38	422	2.56	1.1
Enhanced access to improved farming technologies	4	69	53	15	24	509	3.09	1.1
Increased access to good water supply	3	66	21	36	39	453	2.75	1.3
A better access road to market farm produced	0	48	44	18	55	415	2.55	1.2
Reduced promiscuity among women	0	66	19	37	43	438.0	2.66	1.2
Grand mean						0	2.91	

< 3.0 = Less effective; 3 = Effective

>3 = Very Effective

Relationship between Level of participation and perceived Effect SEEFOR Project

The level of participation has no significant influence on the perceived effect of the project on rural women's socio-economic status. The result in table 3 showed the correlation coefficient (r) of the variable perceived effect and participation as 0.831 and a p-value of 0.000 is less than the level of significance, ($\alpha = 0.05$). This positive value of r shows a positive correlation between the level of participation and the perceived effect of the SEEFOR project on the rural women in the study area who participated in the project. Development experts have always emphasized the link between participation and effectiveness in poverty alleviation programmes. This result collaborates with Kumar (2002) and Nnodim et al (2012) who reported that women's participation can increase the efficiency, effectiveness, self-reliance,

coverage, and sustainability of development projects and programmes.

The implication of this is that a high level of participation increases the level of perceived effectiveness of the project. Given this outcome, the null hypothesis which stated that the level of participation has no significant influence on the perceived effect of the project on rural women socio-economic status and community development was rejected, and the alternative form which states that level of participation has a significant influence on the perceived effect of the project on rural women socio-economic status and community development was accepted. This means that if rural women are allowed to participate fully in all the stages (planning to project evaluation) of a poverty alleviation project the effect of the project on the beneficiaries will be more (Albert et al, 2017; Albert-Elenwa, 2017).

Table 3: Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of the relationship between Level of participation and perceived effect SEEFOR project

Variable	Correlation	Perceived Effect	Level of participation
Perceived effect	Pearson correlation	1	.831**
	Sig (2- tailed)		.000
	N	403	403
Level of participation	Pearson correlation	.831**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	403

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Source: Field Survey, 2021

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study affirmed that State Employment Expenditure For Result (SEEFOR) Project implemented by Fadama has relatively affected the socio economic status of rural women in Delta State. SEEFOR has embarked on the provision of some rural infrastructural projects such as water supply, cargo boats, market stalls, toilets, waste disposal facilities, generators, oil palm processing plants, and feeder roads. The level of rural women's participation in the different stages of the project was low in the study area. Rural women participating in the project had improved their ability to contribute financially to children's education/community development projects; enabled income sources diversification; increased agricultural production; increased income level tremendously; helped in the acquisition of leadership skills and enabled increased savings. It is recommended that: The government and intervention agencies should work closely with the rural women and allow them to participate fully in any poverty alleviation intervention projects as this will ensure the sustainability and positive effect of projects on women socio-economic status and community development.

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