

Training Needs of Women Farmers in Livestock Production: Implications for Rural Development in Oyo State of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT This paper identifies some training needs of women farmers in livestock production and discusses the relevance of such needs to rural development. The study was conducted in 5 (five) selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Oyo state. Structured interview schedule was used to collect information from one hundred and seventy-one (171) women farmers. Analysis of the data collected revealed that women perform virtually all livestock related operations, although they are less involved in marketing of livestock products; construction of livestock houses and slaughter/dressing of animals. The weighted mean scores in knowledge and skills of women farmers were low in compounding of feeds; breeding; identification and diagnosis of sick animal; selection and administration of drugs. Women expressed felt training needs in all the listed operations. The implication for rural development is that empowerment of women farmers through adequate training in all the expressed areas of training needs in livestock production is a predisposing factor to sustainable livelihood and consequent participation in rural development.

INTRODUCTION

During the last decades, concern for the abject poverty and underdevelopment of the rural communities of Nigeria has given rise to several rural development efforts and programmes. Apart from several efforts by communities, private groups, and non-governmental organizations, the Federal, State and Local governments have been involved in a number of rural development programmes. While some of the programmes have yielded fruitful results, many others have not achieved the objectives for which they were set up (Mba, 1995). Rural areas, towards which most development programmes are directed, are characterized by depleted work-force, rudimentary and inefficient mode of production, general lack of basic infrastructure and social amenities such as safe potable water, all season access roads, telecommunication, electricity, schools, medical facilities, good houses, recreational facilities, the paucity of processing factories, markets, banks, storage depots and machine repair shops.

In addition to this situation, there are low level of health care delivery, nutrition hygiene, education and social awareness. The rural areas are normally unable to fully harness their abundant natural resources (Obasanjo and Mabogunje, 1991). Although, the present democratic government in Nigeria is making frantic efforts directed at reversing the ugly situation through the

poverty alleviation programmes which emphasizes empowerment of the people. In the light of this, rural development focus on the needs of people, their access to knowledge, technologies, markets, health care, education, finance and related issues. ESD (1996), advocated for emphasis and special attention on the needs of women, who are the predominant farmers in many developing countries. According to Obasanjo and Mabogunje (1991), rural development must entail programmes directed at increasing the efficiency of rural population such that rural energy is released, output, quality of life and productivity are enhanced, education and sanitation are promoted and resources are optimally exploited in a sustainable way. Importation of ugly characteristics of urbanization such as crime, corruption, cheating, pollution and slums, prostitution and human trafficking should however be avoided at the same time. Another important consideration is that every development programme should include women, and ensure their active participation in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the relevant development programmes.

Rural Development in Nigeria: In the past, rural development was considered as synonymous to agricultural output. This by no means is correct. Development of the rural areas is not mere agricultural and economics growth but includes the creation and fair sharing of social and economic benefits resulting from this growth.

The ambit of rural development is therefore very wide. It includes generation of new employment, more equitable access to arable land, equitable distribution of income, widespread improvements in health, nutrition, housing, maintenance of law and order, creation of incentives and opportunities for saving, credit and investment. It also involves creating wider opportunities for individuals to realize their full potential through education and sharing in the decisions and action, which affects their lives. It is not sectoral but comprehensive (Williams, 1978).

The stated objective of rural development in Nigeria is "to increase rural productivity and income and generally enhance the quality of life in rural areas" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1975). To achieve this objective, various strategies have been employed. Lele (1975); Ajaegbu (1976); Mabogunje (1981); and Farinde (1995) identified the various strategies employed in Nigeria to include Agricultural Development Programmes, Industrial Development Programmes, Cooperative and Community Development Programmes, Youth and Rural Women Development Programmes. Specifically, some of the agricultural development programmes include the National Accelerated Food Programmes (NAFP) established in 1972; Integrated Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), which started as a pilot project in 1971 and became a nationwide programme in 1975; Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of 1976; River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), which commenced operation in 1976; and Green Revolution Programme of 1980. Others include the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DIFRRI) of 1986; and women specific programmes such as Women in Agricultural (WIA of ADP) came on board in 1990; Committee on women and Development (COWAD)- a Non-Governmental Organization; Better Life for Rural Women Programmes (BLRW) of 1987; Family Support Programme (FSP), which replaced BLRW in 1994; Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) of 1997; and Women Cooperatives. These programmes focus mainly on specific sectors of the economy, especially agriculture which is the predominant occupation in the rural area. This is premised on the fact that some experts believed that rural development was simply an economic issue and should be achieved by raising the low levels of rural incomes through agricultural modernization.

In their assessment of the afore-mentioned programmes, Obasanjo and Mabogunje (1991) observed that the activities of the agencies in charge of each of the programmes were complementary and that certain level of successes has been achieved by each of them. The major problem, however, was that the impact of these various activities on conditions of people in the rural areas had been very much less than can be expected from the resources expended on them. Lack of the ability to execute successfully the programmes put together was another problem identified in addition to lack of continuous support and sustenance (financial and otherwise) for the programmes. Successive administrations succumb easily to the temptation of discontinue inherited programmes and projects, to impose new ones so that fresh contracts may be awarded. This singular attitude results in non-coherent and non-lasting policy on rural development in the country. This scenario is also counter productive to the current trends of emphasis on participatory approach to solving rural problems. It could be concluded from the foregoing that all efforts at developing the rural areas of Nigeria would yield little dividend if cooperation, coordination and continuity do not form the cornerstones of any programmes or policy designed for the purpose.

Women in Farming Activities: Boserup (1970) in a study on different rural African communities asserted that women did about 70% of the total work in agriculture. UNECA/FAO's (1975) report revealed that African women are responsible for 100% of the work in food processing, 50% in animal husbandry and 60% in marketing. Women contribute substantially to agriculture production. In Oyo State, Olawoye (1985) reported that 50% of the women were involved in planting, 92% in processing and 79% in marketing of Agricultural produce.

Nigerian women's role in agriculture does not stop in crop production but encompasses other sub-sectors of agriculture such as livestock and fisheries. Women also pick forest products such as snails, mushrooms, vegetables and spices for sale and family consumption. Women are also responsible for tending small livestock such as sheep, goats and pigs as well as poultry. These livestock, which are kept at their backyards constitute emergency source of funds for family use (Nnonyelu and Gadzama, 1991). It is also a common experience with the Yoruba rural women to keep/rear snails in a corner of their home where

water-pots are kept. The water-pots provide cool environment for the snails to thrive well. However, the degree of participation of women in various farming activities is governed by the socio-cultural and economic factors. Women in some settings are faced with discrimination and are less accessible to land, credit, agricultural inputs (such as fertilizers, agro-chemicals, improved seeds and planting materials), agricultural extension services and appropriate technology. In addition to the above stated problems, CTA (1993) identified lack of training as part of the factors militating against women farmers' efficiency and effectiveness. In most cases, according to the report, the training given was aimed at men. The measure suggested for removing the obstacle is to train rural women in the process of project identification; planning; implementation; monitoring; and evaluation.

Training Needs: Training is defined as the act of increasing the knowledge and skills of an employee in doing a particular job (Flippo, 1965). Training is mostly directed at improving the ability of individual to do their vocation more effectively and efficiently. Generally, it involves acquiring information and developing abilities or attitudes, which will result in greater competence in the performance of a work. There are two main agents in training viz; the trainee and trainer. The active participation of both agents at every stage of the training programmes is very important. Williams (1978) suggested five basic steps to be followed in organizing a successful training programme. They are: (i) assessment of needs; (ii) design of relevant means to meet them; (iii) selection of trainees; (iv) conducting the actual training and (v) evaluating the training session. A good understanding of the need is therefore fundamental to successful training. Morrison (1976) stated that training needs exists anytime an actual condition differs from a desirable conditions in the human or people aspect of organizational performances or more specifically when a change in present knowledge, skill and attitude can bring out the desired performance. Proctor and Thornton (1961) defined training needs, as skills, knowledge and attitude an individual requires in overcoming problems as well as avoiding creating problem situations. The training needs of rural women in Nigeria are diverse and vary from one project to the other. The port of concern is that women are traditionally bound in respect of the knowledge and skills being used in most of the projects they are involved. There is a wide gap

between modern or improved Agricultural practices and the local ones. Hence the existence of training needs as a gap to be filled.

Objective of the Study: The objectives of this study is to identify the training needs of women farmers in livestock production and relate it to rural development activities. In essence, this paper will identify and present the importance of meeting the training needs of women farmers in livestock production to the rural development efforts of the country.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Oyo State Nigeria. Five Local Government Areas (LGAs) were purposively selected to ensure good coverage of the state and inclusion of Local Government Areas having more rural communities. A multi-stage sampling design was used to select the rural communities sampled using random sampling technique. A total of one hundred and seventy one (171) women farmers were interviewed. The responses were analyzed using simple frequency counts and weighted mean score of knowledge, skill and importance of training in selected operations. This was used to identify and categorize the training needs of women farmers in the selected livestock production activities. Each of the operations was rated on five-point scale and the weighted mean score of the respondents were calculated. The scores were rated as follows, 3 points and above ranked high and less than 3 points rated low. This was used to categorise the knowledge, skill and importance of training to the respondents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Selected Livestock Production Operations:

Data in Table 1 show the identified livestock farming operations in the study areas. The women farmers performed all the operations. Majority of women farmers were involved in selection of livestock and poultry (61.1%); feeding of animals (77.78); and treatment of sick animals (60.23%). However, they are less involved in construction of livestock houses (29.82%); slaughtering and dressing of animals (31.58%); and marketing of livestock (25.15%). These operations might culturally have been reserved for men; but all the same, the involvement of women in them is substantial. It is an indication of increased participation of women in farming activities that

Table 1: Distribution of women farmers by livestock/poultry production operation performed by them (N= 171)

<i>Livestock/Poultry Operations</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Selection of livestock and poultry	104	61.11
Construction of livestock houses	57	29.82
Feeding of Animals	133	77.78
Slaughtering/ Dressing of Animals	54	31.58
Marketing of livestock	43	25.15
Treatment of sick animal	103	60.23

Sources: Field Survey, 1995.

were traditionally classified as men's. This might be prompted by the withdrawal of male labour from agriculture to the wage sector mostly in the urban centres. The low involvement of women in the marketing of livestock run counter to the prevailing situation in Yoruba land where women are the major marketers of local poultry chickens. Their increased involvement in cattle, sheep and goat business is significant at this point in time when the International focus is on women empowerment. This prevailing situation where women are now taking over economic enterprises that are meant exclusively for men in the study areas is a predisposing factor to rapid and effective rural development.

Women's Knowledge and Skill of Livestock Production Operations:

Data in Table 2 shows that women farmers had low mean knowledge and skill scores in construction of modern houses for poultry (2.90); goat pen (2.93); sheep pen (2.92) and pig pen (2.83); compounding of livestock feeds (2.94); selection of readily compounded feeds (2.85), and cross breeding of livestock (2.70). Others are identification of sick animal (2.94); diagnosis of sickness (2.80); selection of drugs (2.65); and administration or dispensing the drugs (2.53). The reason for the low mean score in knowledge and skill in construction of modern houses for poultry and livestock could be due to the fact that most of the animals were kept on free range and semi-intensive system. The performance of other related operations where means score were low could be described highly technical, which upgraded knowledge and skill for efficiency and effectiveness are required.

Importance of Training in the identified Livestock Production Operations:

Data in Table 2 also show that the perceptions of the respondents on the importance of training in all the identified operations were scored high (Mean= 3.754-4.09). It is possible that women farmers may have the desire to raise animals due to income that could be generated from such activities. The

Table 2: Respondents mean scores on knowledge, skill and importance of training in poultry and livestock farming

<i>Practices/ Operations in Livestock/ Poultry</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>		<i>Skill</i>		<i>Importance of training</i>	
	<i>Weighted means score</i>	<i>Remarks</i>	<i>Weighted mean score</i>	<i>Remarks</i>	<i>Weighted mean score</i>	<i>Remark</i>
Construction of Modern Poultry Houses	2.90	L	2.49	L	4.07	H
Construction of modern goat pen	2.93	L	2.65	L	4.08	H
Construction of modern sheep pen	2.92	L	2.88	L	3.99	H
Construction of modern pigs' pen	2.83	L	2.75	L	4.03	H
Feeding of poultry	3.63	H	3.43	H	4.09	H
Feeding of sheep/goat	3.49	H	3.41	H	4.04	H
Feeding of pig	3.20	H	3.10	H	3.95	H
Compounding of livestock feed	2.94	L	2.90	L	4.09	H
Selection of readily compound feed	2.85	L	2.70	L	3.86	H
Use of kitchen and farm wastes as feed	3.34	H	3.11	H	3.74	H
Breeding of livestock (cross breeding)	2.70	L	2.59	L	4.05	H
Breeding of livestock (free mating)	3.27	H	3.06	H	3.92	H

L= Low

H= High

importance of animal protein in their diets might have been proven to them thereby promoting their desire to increase their intake of animal protein. Hence, the women were willing to be trained in all the relevant operations irrespective of their knowledge and skill possessed. This is demonstrated through a comparative study of the weighted mean scores in knowledge, skill and importance of training in the listed operations (Table 2). It was revealed that women farmers perceived that they need training in all the operations. Their high score in knowledge and skill in some operations such as feeding of livestock and poultry and free mating may indicate areas where researcher may not feel that they need training. Hence, a category of need expressed by them could be regarded as "researcher's unfelt but trainee felt needs" as did Ajayi and Laogun (1999)." Another category of training needs as identified by Frutchery (1966) is "unfelt training needs". This is "researcher's felt but trainees' unfelt needs" in Ajayi and Laogun (1999).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

It is evident from the foregoing that women farmers have training needs which should be met in the course of development programmes directed both at them and the rural populace. It is important however to stress that in order to sustain the interest and motivation of the rural population particularly women towards their economic empowerment, the felt needs should be addressed. As emanated from this study the findings shows that women farmers' desired training was prominent in every operation listed. However, their skill was rated low in construction of modern livestock houses for poultry, goat, sheep and pig. They also had low skill of performance in compounding livestock feed, selecting readily compounded feed, breeding of livestock and general livestock or poultry health management. The implication of all these for rural development is that empowerment of women farmers through adequate training in all the expressed areas of training needs in livestock production is a predisposing factor to sustainable livelihoods. Efforts should be directed at meeting these training for the improvement of the production of these livestock, which will in turn increase the financial strength of rural women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In order to achieve the stated objectives of

rural development in Nigeria, which is "to increase rural productivity and income and generally enhance the quality of life in rural areas", meeting the training needs of rural women farmers in livestock production becomes imperative, given the relevance of livestock production towards the achievement of this objective.

2. Deliberate attempts should be directed at improving rural women who are involved in food production. This could be done by improving their knowledge and skill at performance of the listed operations in livestock production. Their income might increase and enhance their purchasing power and protein consumption of their households, which in turn will promote their good health, and active participation in development activities.
3. Agricultural extension agents should be encouraged to train women farmers on the improved livestock and poultry management strategies. Specifically, the importance of these training to rural development should be stressed. The most effective way of achieving this is through monitoring and evaluation of women extension programmes.
4. The need to develop human beings who are the beneficiaries of the infrastructure, which may be put in place, cannot be over emphasized. Therefore, the training needs identified in this study remains essential to sustainable rural development programmes of a government or a nation.

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