

Trainees Perception of the Effectiveness of NDDC Agricultural Training Programme on Improved Youth Livelihoods and Crime Reduction in Bayelsa State

¹NEMINE, E.L. AND ²SANGOTEGBE, N.S.

¹Department of Agricultural Education,
Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education Sagbama, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

²Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Email: lulunemine@gmail.com

Abstract

The NDDC agricultural training programme was initiated in Bayelsa State to curb criminal activities and engage idle youths. Several years down the line, criminal activities are rife in the state. This study assessed the NDDC trainee's perception of the effectiveness of the programme on their livelihoods and crime reduction in the state. Thirty eight (38) respondents from two training centres were sampled using snowball technique. Data was collected from focus group discussions and with the aid of structured questionnaire. The statistical tools used for the analysis include descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage and inferential statistics including chi-square and Pearson product moment correlation and a 5 point Likert scale containing pre-tested statements. The study revealed that mean age of trainees was 38.5 years. Majority of respondents (71%) complained of constraints such as poor feeding at the training centres while 63% were poorly accommodated. At 0.05 per cent level of significance, there was significant relationship between constraints at the training centre ($r=0.361$) and perception of effectiveness of the programme. 47% of trainees had favourable perception while 53% had unfavourable perception of the programme. It was recommended that the NDDC should enroll youths less than thirty years of age for the programme, ensure proper feeding and provide adequate accommodation at the training centres.

Keywords: Trainees, Perception, Agricultural Programme, Crime Reduction

Introduction

The Niger Delta Region is the bedrock of Nigeria's crude oil production and comprises nine states namely, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo, Rivers, Abia, Imo and Ondo States. Ordinarily, the Niger Delta should be a gigantic economic reservoir of national and international importance. Its rich endowments of oil and gas resources feed methodically into the international economic system, in exchange for massive revenues that carry the promise of rapid socio-economic transformation within the delta itself. In reality, the Niger Delta is a region suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth and squalor, and endemic conflict (UNDP, 2006).

The Niger Delta region attracted the attention of the British colonial masters as far back as 1950. The colonial government then, set up a commission to examine the peculiar developmental needs of the region and proffer solutions for developing the most difficult terrain in Nigeria. In 1958, the commission headed by Sir Henry Willinks, submitted a report which recommended that the Niger Delta deserved a special developmental vehicle to be administered by the Federal Government. This led to the first interventionist agency for the region; the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) in 1960 (The Capitol Magazine 2007). However, not much was achieved before the outbreak of political crisis in the Western Region in 1962, of which the then Delta Province was a part until 1963. This was followed by the Nigerian civil war of 1967-70. Another effort, thereafter, was made to develop the Niger Delta with the establishment of the Niger Delta Basin and Rural Development Authority in 1976. Later, a Presidential Task Force was set up in the face of youth restiveness in the region while 1.5 percent of the Federation Account was allocated to it for the development of the region. This again failed to make an impact. Then in 1992 the Oil and Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was set up for the same purpose. OMPADEC could not make any noticeable impact until it was scrapped in 1998.

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was set up in 2001 to offer lasting solution to the socio-economic difficulties of the Delta (The Capitol Magazine 2007). There are 13,329 settlements in the Niger Delta Region (which includes Bayelsa State), 95% of which have less than 5000 inhabitants. In the riverine zone, the vast majority of people live in dispersed and often quite isolated

villages and hamlets - clusters of compounds housing 100-500 people and accessible only along the maze of creeks and tributaries. Here almost 90% of the rural inhabitants fall below the conventional poverty line (\$1 per day) dependent largely upon aquatic resources and petty trading for their livelihoods. The human poverty index for developing countries (HPI-1) for Bayelsa State is between 20.595-27.158 per cent which is low compared to the national HPI-1 of 38.8 per cent (UNDP, 2006). Overall the population is young and poor: 60% of the population is less than 30 years old and almost 40 per cent are between the ages of 15 and 29. A youthful age structure implies that many people remain outside of the working age bracket (UNDP, 2006).

The under development of the Niger Delta region has exacerbated criminal activities such as illegal oil bunkering, arson, hostage, taking kidnapping, killing and maiming. These activities are perpetrated by the youths who are mainly unemployed. To curb these activities, the NDDC has embarked on some capacity building programmes. One of such programmes is the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Training Programme. The programme has been in existence for over five years. The training centres include: Songhai Delta, Amukpe, in Delta State and Bioresources Development Centre (BIODEC), Odi in Bayelsa. The former is an establishment of Delta State Government while BIODEC is a regional centre of the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA), a parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology.

The areas of training include aquaculture business skills, poultry production business skills, bee keeping/ honey production, snail business skills and grass cutter production. Others are rabbit production, cassava production, rice production and piggery (NDDC NEWS, 2009). About 1,900 of the trainees are from Bayelsa State. Beneficiaries of the programme were to be assisted to own their farms through the NDDC Credit and Entrepreneurial Development Programme in collaboration with some commercial banks, Nigerian Agricultural Cooperatives and Rural Development bank (NACRDB) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). The NDDC trained farmers were encouraged to form cooperative societies to enable them assess these loans (NDDC NEWS 2009).

Despite the fact that the programme has been ongoing for over five years, criminal activities are still rampant in the state. According to a report by the Nigerian

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Compass, militants invaded a reception held in honour of Mr. Timi Alaibe, the special adviser to the president on Niger Delta Matters. A mobile policeman on duty was disposed of his rifle and another youth was shot dead, The Daily Independent of 13th November, 2010 reported that Joint Military Taskforce (JTF) operatives launched a fresh offensive on militant hideouts in Foropa, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area in Bayelsa State. Items recovered included weapons as well as five identity cards of militants believed to have embraced the amnesty programme.

It is therefore necessary to obtain the views of the NDDC agricultural trainees to determine the extent to which the programme has improved their livelihoods and reduced crime in the state. The general objective is to determine the NDDC Agricultural trainees' perception on the effectiveness of the programme on their livelihoods and crime reduction. Specifically, the study:

1. Described the demographic characteristics of the NDDC agricultural trainees in the state.
2. Identified the method of training used at the training centres.
3. Identified the constraints faced by the NDDC agricultural trainees at the training centres.
4. Determined the perception of trainees on the effectiveness of the programme on improved youth livelihoods and crime reduction.

In addition, the study investigated the following null hypotheses:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between selected personal characteristics of trainees and perception of effectiveness of the training programme.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between constraints at the training centre and perception of effectiveness of the training programme.

Methodology

Bayelsa State is located in southern Nigeria. It shares boundaries with Delta State on the North, Rivers State on the East and the Atlantic Ocean on the West and South. It is a picturesque tropical rain forest, with an area of about 21,110 square kilometers. Bayelsa state has eight Local Government Areas namely Brass,

Ekeremor, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Nembe, Ogbia, Sagbama, Southern Ijaw and Yenagoa. The population for this research were trainees of the NDDC Agricultural training programme in the state. Sampling was done using snowball technique. A total of thirty eight (38) trainees were used for the study out of a sampling frame of about one thousand nine hundred (1900) trainees. The reasons for the small sample size were that most of the trainees were inaccessible after the programme while some of them outrightly refused to fill the questionnaire due to their grievances with the NDDC. Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data such as sex, age, etc. Both face validity and reliability tests were carried out to confirm the appropriateness of the research instruments used for the study. Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were held at Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area to obtain qualitative data on the following:

1. How they heard about the NDDC Agricultural training programme and how trainees were selected.
2. The facilities at the training centres and their general welfare during the training.
3. Determine whether skills acquired during training were been utilized.
4. The challenges faced by the participants.
5. Their perception about the effectiveness of the programme.

Perception of the effectiveness of the training programme was measured using five point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to score the perceptual statements as applied to them; Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (U), Agree(A), and Strongly Agree (SA). For positive statements, scores of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were awarded to SD, D, U, A, and SA respectively. For negative statements, scores of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were assigned to SA, A, U, D and SD respectively. There were twenty perceptual statements. Ten (10) of these statements were negative while the other ten (10) were positive. The minimum score for each group was 5 and the maximum score was 100. Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency and percentage distribution were used to analyse data on personal characteristics. Chi-square was also used to analyse the personal characteristics of respondents. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test for significant relationship between constraints and Perception of Effectiveness of Agricultural Training Programme on Improved Youth Livelihoods and Crime Reduction.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic characteristics of trainees

Table 1 show that the mean age of trainees is 38.5 years .The implication of this are that older persons attended the training programme. In a region where 62.1 per cent of the population is below the age of 30 years and are dependent on their families (UNDP, 2006), the training did not capture the desired target who are mostly idle youth. It also reveals that 84.2% of trainees are males while 15.8% are female. The reason for the low percentage of women in the programme could be attributed to the fact that women have a lot of domestic jobs and may not be available to participate in such programmes. This is in line with a UNDP report which suggests that women and youth are the most neglected in the Niger Delta development intervention. Skill acquisition programmes should clearly be targeted to these groups so they can be equipped for employment in the public and private sectors (UNDP, 2006). Table 1 further show that 63.2% of trainees were married while 36.8% were single. Most of the trainees had sources of income, and can support their spouses. The results also show that 50% of trainees had a secondary school education while 39.5% had tertiary education. After the training, 23.7% of the trainees were farmers, 18.4% were businessmen, 21.1% were students/applicants, and 28.9% were civil servants while the remaining 7.8% were a mix of politicians, mason and carpenters. The implication of this is that the percentage of trainees involved in farming is less than that of civil servants. The expectation is that a greater percentage of trainees should have farming as their major occupation after undergoing such training. This means that the program failed in this regard. This is in line with UNDP 2006 which reported that one of the challenges of human resource development in the Niger Delta is how to win people back to traditional livelihoods that sustained them in the past. Fishing and Agriculture have suffered most due to environmental and social challenges as well as government neglect and has made it difficult to motivate the young people to be interested in such.

Method of Training

Table 2 shows that 97.4% of participants indicated that demonstration method was used at their training centre and 100% indicated the use of both lecture and practical at their training centres. The importance of using of different teaching methods cannot be overemphasized. Agricultural trainees are from diverse backgrounds, having varying abilities and interest. They all need to be carried along

during the training and therefore need more than one training method. According to Adefereti, (2008), using a variety of methods will cater for their differences and encourage active involvement by the trainees.

Constraints at Training Centre

Table 3 shows that 23.7% of trainees indicated that shortage of trainers was severe while 10.5% indicated not severe, 31.6% indicated shortage of training equipment while 18.4% indicated not severe and 15.8% indicated that use of outdated technology was severe while 5.3% indicated not severe. Shortage of trainers and equipment indicates that teaching/learning was not effectively done. This confirms a report by Okotoni and Erero (2005) that problems confronting training in Nigeria public service include poor staffing for most training centres and inadequate training facilities.

Some of the trainees (71.1%) stated that inadequate feeding was severe while 7.9% were of the view that it was not severe. The FGDs revealed that the Biodec trainees were fed once a day instead of three times. They also complained that the food was so poor that most of them refused to eat. Also, 63.1% also indicated that the accommodation problem was severe. This was accounted for by the Biodec trainees who were not accommodated at all

Perceptual Statements of Trainees

Table 4 shows that 47.4% of trainees had favourable perception to the NDDC Agricultural training programme while 52.6% had unfavourable perception. The unfavourable perception could be attributed to constraints at the training centre. These include shortage of trainers, shortage of training equipment, use of outdated technology, inadequate feeding and inadequate accommodation and were obviously the reason for the unfavourable perception of the training programme.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 5 shows that there is no significant relationship between sex, marital status and the year of training and perception of effectiveness of the training programme. At 0.05 per cent level of significance, participants sex ($X^2=0.011$), marital status ($X^2=2.465$), educational status ($X^2=7.753$), and year of training ($X^2=3.796$) had no relationship with perception of effectiveness of the training programme. This implies that sex, marital status, educational status and year of

training have no influence on perception of effectiveness of the training programme. The programme does not satisfy one sex at the expense of the other. Irrespective of whether participants were married, single, divorced or trained at a particular year their perception of the programme was the same.

PPMC results on table 6 indicate that at 0.05 level of significance, there is no significant relationship between age ($r = -0.009$) and perception of participants. The result implies that age does not influence the perception of the participants. The same perception prevails whether the participant were young or old. However, the result further shows that there is a significant relationship between the extent of constraints ($r = -0.361$) faced by the respondents and their perceived effectiveness of the NDDC training programmes for improved youth livelihood and crime reduction in the state. This means the higher the constraints faced, the unfavourable the perception of trainees of the effectiveness of the programme. This implies that the various constraints outlined earlier on in this report were significant enough to have reduced the effectiveness of the programme. This suggests that should these constraints remain untackled as urgently as possible, the realization of the goals of this training programme may be far-fetched.

Conclusion

This study revealed that older persons attended the training programme. In a region where more than half of the population is less than thirty (30) years, the training did not capture the targeted group. The study also revealed that after the training, most of the trainees were not farmers. The aim of training the youths to engage in farming was not achieved. The FGDs exposed the problems faced by trainees during the training period. These ranged from food shortages, accommodation problems and shortage of trainers at the training centres. The unfavourable perception of the programme was linked to this.

It is recommended that the NDDC should take pro-active steps to ensure that youths enroll for the training. One way to achieve this is through grassroots mobilization. They should also ensure proper feeding and provide adequate accommodation to participants. There is the need to ascertain the views of other stakeholders in the state on how best such programmes should be organized in order to achieve the desired goals.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Trainees

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
AGES			
11-20	1	2.6	
21-30	11	28.9	
31-40	12	31.6	38.5
41-50	9	23.7	
51-60	3	7.9	
61 and above	2	5.3	
Total	38	100	
Sex			
Male	32	84.2	
Female	6	15.8	
Total	38	100	
Marital status			
Single	14	36.8	
Married	24	63.2	
Divorced	0	0.0	
Widowed	0	0.0	
Total	38	100	
Educational status			
Primary education	4	10.5	
Junior secondary	1	2.6	
Senior secondary	18	47.4	
Tertiary	15	39.5	
Total	38	100	
Major occupation			
Farmer	9	23.7	
Business	7	18.4	
Student	3	7.9	
Applicant	5	13.2	
Civil servant	11	28.9	
Politician	1	2.6	
Mason	1	2.6	
Carpenter	1	2.6	
Total	38	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Table 2: Distribution of Method of Training at the Training Centres

	Methods					
	Demonstration		Lecture		Practical	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	37	97.4	38	100.0	38	100.0
No	1	2.6	0	0.0	0	0.0

Source: Field survey, 2011

Table 3: Distribution of Constraints At The Training Centre

	Constraints									
	Trainers		Training Equipment		Outdated Technology		Inadequate Feeding		Accommodation	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Not applicable	25	65.8	19	50.0	30	78.9	8	21.1	14	36.8
Very severe	7	18.4	7	18.4	3	7.9	21	55.3	23	60.5
Severe	2	5.3	5	13.2	3	7.9	6	15.8	1	2.6
Not severe	4	10.5	7	18.4	2	5.3	3	7.9	0	0.0
Total	38	100.0	38	100.0	38	100.0	38	100.0	38	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Table 4: Perceptual Statements of Respondents

	F	%	X
Favourable	18	47.4	56.474
Unfavourable	20	52.6	

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Table 5: Chi-square Analysis of Trainees Personal Characteristics and Perception of Effectiveness of Training Programme.

Variable	X ²	Df	p-value	Decision
Sex	0.011	1	0.916	N/S
Marital status	2.465	3	0.482	N/S
Educational status	7.753	7	0.35	N/S
Year of training	3.796	3	0.284	N/S

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Table 6: PPMC on Relationship Between Variables and Effectiveness of Training

Variable	r	p-value	Decision
Age vs perception	-0.009	0.958	N/S
Constraints	0.361	0.026	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2011

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Biographical Note: Erekpokeme Lucia Nemine holds a Bachelors degree (B.Agric) in Agronomy from the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria and a Masters degree in Agricultural Extension and Rural Development from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She was a lecturer in the Bayelsa State College of Arts and Science, Agudama-Epie, Bayelsa State for several years before moving to Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Sagbama, Bayelsa State in 2012. She is currently the Acting Head, Department of Agricultural Education in the College.

Biographical Note: Nathaniel S. Sangotegbe holds a Bachelor of Agriculture from the University of Agriculture Abeokuta (now Federal University of Agriculture) Abeokuta Ogun State, Nigeria. He later proceeded to the University of Ibadan, Nigeria where he obtained a Masters degree in Agricultural Extension and Rural Development. Currently, Nathaniel is a Doctoral student in the same department. As a member of Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria (AESON) and Rural Sociological Association of Nigeria (NRSA), he has attended conferences where he presented a number of papers. Nathaniel has also authored a number of articles published in learned journals and conference proceedings.