
ACCESS TO LAND, QUALITY OF LIFE AND EMIGRATION ON THE MAMBILLA PLATEAU, TARABA STATE NIGERIA**¹Ibrahim umar; ²Mahmood H. Umar and ³Umar M. Adamu****¹Department of Crop Protection, Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola, Nigeria****²Department of Agric Education, Federal College of Education, Yola, Nigeria****³Department of Agricultural Extention, Adamawa State University, Mubi, Nigeria****ABSTRACT**

This study was carried out to assess how access to land affects quality of life on the Mambilla plateau. Data were collected using the questionnaire, interview and personal observations. A proportionality factor was used in selecting ninety (90) villages out of 227 villages of the study area and 500 farmers were selected from these villages using stratified random sampling. Among the findings is that farmers have inadequate access to farm land and that they are no equal access to land on the Mambilla plateau by the farmers. The crop producers have less access to land than the animal rearers. Zember and Tukur (2005) stated that an estimated total land area of about 83.6% and 8.3% are devoted to range land and crop cultivation respectively on the Mambilla plateau. Poor agricultural practices by the farmers has subjected the fragmented land to continuous cropping and over grazing leading to loss of nutrient and erosion for low yield. The average family size of the farmers is 7 persons in a family with an average annual income of N250000 meaning that most of the farmers are living on less than a dollar per day. The findings also show that there is positive correlation between annual income of the farmers and their farm size and those farmers are poor as a result of in-adequate access to land. The above factor is partly responsible for conflict and migration on the plateau. Recommendations on how to overcome these challenges are proffered.

INTRODUCTION

A lot of resources have been channeled and increasingly being channeled towards programmes aimed at alleviating poverty with a view to achieving better quality of life, by various international organizations and governments of the developing nations. Poverty is said to be responsible for lack of human, social, economic and political development of many nations including Nigeria. The devastating effect of poverty is so pronounced that individuals or societies affected can hardly achieve desired level of well being or better quality of life. Muhammed (2005) stated that pervasive and endemic nature of poverty can inhibit the development of communities or nations due to its consequences. They further stressed that, the consequences of poverty includes the inability to feed well, poor health or susceptibility to health problems, infant mortality, low life expectancy; poor and inadequate housing, street children due to parental neglect or abuse. Other consequences includes inability to send children to school, high school dropout rates, mental derangement, prostitution, development of slum settlements in cities, increase male out migration from rural to urban areas in search of manual job, restiveness of unemployed youth, increase in drug abuse and violent crimes. Loss of self esteem, powerlessness or inability to participate meaningfully in political and social life activities are also mentioned as consequences of poverty.

Translating the above manifestation of poverty into real life situation means that poor people are in one way or the other not satisfied with their well being or has a low quality of life. Umar and umar (2007) stated that there are so many factors responsible for societal and individual poverty, but access to land is one of the fundamental causes of poverty. Land is a significant factor of production such that many people are employed in agriculture and agricultural related activities producing food and raw materials. Food in-security is a global problem, people are said to be food secured when food is available and affordable to meet their nutritional needs (Egbutah 2009). When people have in-adequate access to land, it will not be possible to produce enough food talk less of making it available and affordable for all the people all the times. In-adequate access to land will leads to land fragmentation, lost of fertility due to continuous cropping and finally erosion making it difficult to produce enough food. This situation will leads to poverty cycle (low output, low income, low savings, and low investment). A society or individual that is faced with this situation will hardly escape poverty. In an effort to manage poverty associated with in- adequate access to land, people tend to migrate to get adequate access to land for their production to generate enough income to satisfy basic and essential needs of life. Ekon (2003) stated that nearly all migration studies tend to conclude that people migrate primary for economic reasons. He further stated that in Nigeria, in- sufficiency of land within the farmers own village, or ethnic territory has also been found to generate migration particularly among the Igbo's.

Statement of Research Problem

Mambilla plateau is one of the few places in Nigeria that is blessed with abundant natural resources such as favorable ecological condition for the cultivation of tree crops like tea, coffee, cocoa, pea, guava, cola-nut, apple, timber and grass land for grazing and production of livestock products. It has abundant water and solid mineral resources which attracts people from within and outside the country to farm, mined and do other businesses on the plateau. Living in the midst of abundant natural resources, it is expected that the standard of living and quality of life of the people on the Mambilla plateau should be better. However, observations show that there are evidences of dissatisfactions and discomfort among the people. This can be seen in the series of ethnic intolerance and emigration of people. Abound also is the issue of low production of food crops, unemployment, drug abuse, and above all, poverty. Displeasure and discomfort are manifestation of poor well being. The degree of well being as felt by an individual or group of people is the replica of their quality of life. A cursory observation has also shown that many people on the plateau live under poor housing conditions and lack other basic facilities like electricity, potable water supply, and good road transport. It is therefore, pertinent to pose these questions. Are there variations in the quality of life on the Mambilla plateau? What are the factors that are responsible for this variation in quality of life among the people? How do the people of Mambilla plateau perceived and respond to the various factors that affect their quality of life? And what can be done to improve the quality of life on the mambilla plateau? It is against this background that this study is designed to find answers to some of these and other questions with a view to ascertaining the variation in quality of life on the Mambilla Plateau.

The Mambilla Plateau

Mambilla Plateau in Saradauna Local Government Area of Taraba State Nigeria is unique in its Geography as compared with other parts of the country. It is a hilly highland and the highest plateau in Nigeria. It has a mean level of about 1524 metres above sea level with land area of over 9,389 square kilometers. The plateau shares its south and Eastern borders with the Republic of Cameroon with the rest of the plateau in Taraba state. It is inhabited majorly by the Mambilla people, Fulani and Kaka people (Mahmood 2005). The plateau derived its name from Mambilla- a language spoken by the people. Mambilla plateau has a comparatively cold climate. The climate is of the mountain type which is semi-temperate in nature. Daytime temperature hardly exceeds 25°C making it the coldest plateau region in Nigeria. Rainy season is associated with heavy and regular rainfall which last from the middle of March up to end of December with occasional rain in January and February. The plateau is virtually treeless except for the man made tree plantations. The predominant vegetation is mainly low grasses with average sunshine hours of 5 hours a day. Agriculture forms the economic mainstay of the people with an estimated total land area of about 83.6% and 8.3% devoted to range land and crop cultivation respectively (Zemba and Tukur 2005)

METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire contains information on the availability and access to land on the Mambilla plateau, methods of land ownership, types of farming, quantity of farm produce, annual income, family size, size of farm land, and how these affects the people's quality of life. Data for the study were mainly collected from primary sources through the use of structured questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussion and personal observations. Five hundred questionnaires were distributed based on development areas.

The Mambilla plateau has eight development areas (Gembu, Kakara, Mbanga, Warwar, Kabri, Nguroje, Titong, Mayondaga). The number of villages selected for the study, from each of the Development Area is proportional to the size of the Development Area. A proportionality factor is used in making the selection using the formula stated below:-

$$S = \frac{n}{N} \times 90$$

Where:

S = the number of villages to be sampled from a Development Area.

n = the number of villages in a Development Area.

N = the number of villages in all the Development Areas of the Local Government of study.

90 = is the desired number of villages to be sampled from the local Government Area of the study.

A proportionality factor was introduced to determine the number of respondents coming from each of the villages sampled. The proportionality factor is stated thus:-

$$Q = \frac{F}{P} \times 500$$

Where:

Q = number of respondents to be sampled from a village in a Development Area.

F = population of a Development Area.

P = population of the Local Government Area.

500 = is the desired number of respondents to be sampled from the Local Government Area of study.

Ninety (90) villages were sampled out of 227 villages of the Local Government Area in which 500 respondents were also sampled out of the 224437 (census 2006) population of the Local Government Area using the proportionality factor. Both the descriptive and the inferential statistics were used in analyzing the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Access to land is fundamental in examining rural quality of life; this is because the economy of most rural areas depends on agriculture and related activities. Agricultural activities can only take place when the people have access to land. On the Mambilla plateau, fifty eight percent (58%) of the respondents are involved in farming (Animal rearing and crop farming) see table 1.1. According to Zemba and Tukur (2005), an estimated total land area of about 83.6% and 8.3% are devoted to range land and crop cultivation respectively on the Mambilla Plateau. The ratio of people involved in animal rearing as compared to crop production can be estimated to 1:10 ratio and the reverse in the case of access to land (figure 1.1).

Table 1.1: Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	Number	Percentage (%)
Farming	290	58
Trading	90	18
Civil servant	50	10
Dependents	70	14
Total	500	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2009*

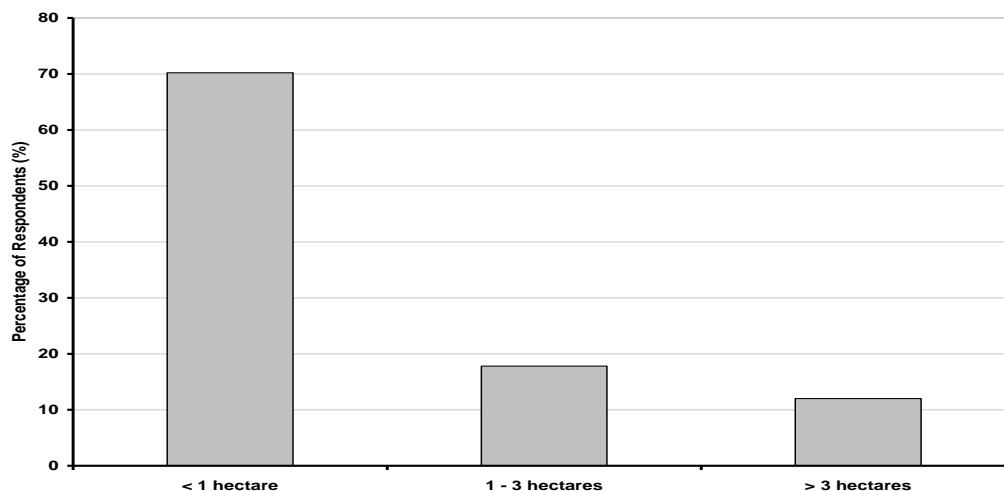


Figure 1.1: Bar chart showing size of farm land owned by respondents

The graph above shows that 70% of the respondents have access to less than one hectare of land, 18% 1-3 hectare, and 12% have 3 hectares and above. Continuous cropping, overgrazing and poor agricultural practices are the major reasons why the agricultural lands on the plateau have erosion problems and low levels of soil fertility (Danjuma 2009). When a farmer has a fragmented land that is not up to one hectare and yet suffers erosion and fertility problems, hardly can he cultivate to produce adequate food to feed a family of seven talk less of having excess to generate income. This is an indication that most farmers on the plateau lack means of generating enough income to satisfy their basic and essential needs of life. If you take away from man all that belongs to land, you have disembodied him (Barlowe, 1978). According to him, land remains an asset of great importance to African economy, as a source of income, food, employment and export earnings. Forty percent (40%) of the farmers obtained their farms from government, 28% inherited their farms from their parents while 12% are caretakers of the land on which they farm. The remaining 10% are farming on their family farms, 3% bought their farms, 2% are leasing, 5% of the farmers are renting see table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Land Ownership of Respondents on the Mambilla plateau.

Means of land ownership	Number	Percentage
Government allocation	200	40
Inheritance	140	28
Care taker	60	12
Family land	50	10
Bought the land	15	3
Leasing	10	2
Renting	25	5
TOTAL	500	100

The implication of farm land and how the farms are obtained have a significant effect on the quantity of farm output which in turn affects the income and eventually quality of life. The inability of the farmers to practice mechanized farming such as the use of machinery, improved seeds and seedlings, herbicide and insecticide also affects quality and quantity of farm output. The practice of mechanized farming is one of the methods used by the government through the establishment of Agricultural Development Programmes (ADP) to improve the traditional systems of production and raise the productivity, income and standard of living of the small scale farmers who provide over 90% of gross domestic food supplies (Mahmood 2005). About ninety percent of all the farmers that are crop producers cannot produce enough food from their farms to sustain their family, and also lack the means to get enough food to feed their family. The varied tenure system of land on the Mambilla plateau is responsible for the various small farm land owned by the crop producers. This situation is responsible for the small quantities of farm output which coupled with the inability of the farmers to practice mechanized farming have subjected most of the farmers to subsistence farming. When farmers practice subsistence farming, it is always difficult to

overcome poverty among them due to poverty cycle (small output, low income, small saving, low investment, back to small output). Lack of land or financial resources can be referred to as food insecurity. Poverty is said to be responsible for food insecurity. This is because Poor people lack access to sufficient resources to produce or buy quality food. Poor farmers may have very small farms, use less effective farming techniques, and/or be unable to afford fertilizers and labor-saving equipments, all of which limit food production. Often they cannot grow enough food for themselves, let alone generate income by selling excess to others. Without economic resources and the political voice, poor farmers may be forced to less productive land possibly causing further environmental deterioration. The ability to obtain enough food for an active, healthy life is the most basic of human needs, because when groups of people have access to the food they need, they will live happier and healthier. Food insecure household cannot achieve this fundamental element of well-being. The inability of the crop producers on the Mambilla plateau to produce enough food for their family is a pointer to poor quality of life among the crop producers. On the contrary, the animal rearers have enough land to cultivate crops and rear their animals. In view of this advantage, most of the animal rearers have enough land area that can sustain adequate number of animals that will provide them with the means to obtain enough food for their families.

The Institute for Peace and Conflicts Resolution in Nigeria stated clearly in a research work carried out on the conflict of 2002 on the Mambilla plateau that the Mambilla area is an agrarian region but the inhabitation employing primitive method of farming which has significant bearing on the conflict. The farmers resort to un-relentless search for fertile land which often pitched against equally nomadic cattle rearers in search of pasture. Their findings further reveals that the Mambilla plateau lacks many social amenities such as water, electricity, health services and good roads network which are necessary for better quality of life. Despite the facts that the Mambilla plateau is an agrarian society, inadequate land has rendered many people unemployed. The cool climate of the plateau has made several wealthy Nigerians and indeed, some corporate organizations such as the Nigerian Beverages Production Company to have acquired large portions of land much of which has not been developed for productive ventures that was the excuse for the acquisition. Rather, such lands are fenced with bared wires to restrict encroachment by grazers and crop farmers alike. With each successive land acquired by these groups, the land available to the rest of the communities reduces and becomes smaller and smaller. Meanwhile, the population of the communities has continued to increase thereby leading to more intense competition among the various user groups for the very limited space. The individual size of farm land with their corresponding annual income were subjected to a correlation analysis, which yielded a correlation value of 0.832 at 0.001 significant level, showing that there was significant relationship between size of farm land and income,. From this analysis, it can be deduced that since, most of the animal rearers have more access to land than the crop producers; it means that the animal rearers have more ability to generate income to meet their basic and essential needs than the crop producers. Result of the study shows that 80% of the farmers do not (crop producers) earns up to ₦300,000 as annual income from their cultivation, while

20% of the farmers (animal rearers) earns more than ₦300,000 as annual income see table 1.3.

Table 5.5: Income Distribution of Respondents

Range of Income Earn Per Annum	Number	Percentage (%)
Below N90,000	80	16
N91,000 – N200,000	220	44
N201,000 – 300,000	100	20
N301,000 – 400,000	35	7
Above N400,000	65	13
Total	500	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Most of the animal rearers own means of transport and do not trek during their economic activities but most of the crops producers trek to their farms to convey their farm produces from the farm to the house. Finally, taking the average family sizes of those with less access to land and dividing it with their average income, it will be clear that they are living on less than one dollar a day. It is accepted that anybody or groups that live on less than two dollar a day which is equivalent to N318 is/are poor. A correlation analysis between farmers size of farm land and their annual income gave a positive correlation see table 1.4 (Annual income on the plateau increases with increase in farm land among farmers)

Table 1.4: Value of Correlation Analysis of Farm-land against Income of Respondents among Development Areas

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.832	.020	33.436	.001
No of Valid Cases		500			

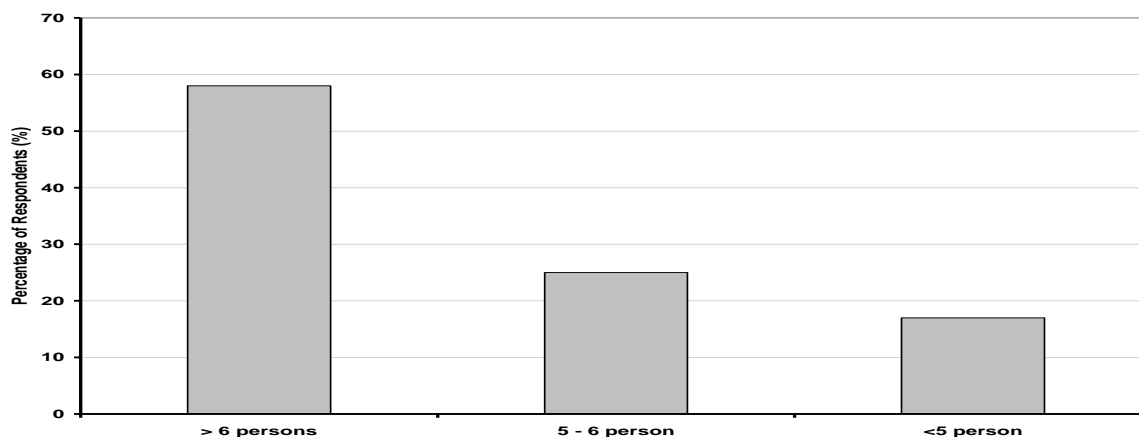


Figure 1.2: Bar chart showing family size distribution and their percentages among the respondents

CONCLUSION

The most prominent occupation on the Mambilla Plateau is farming but the access to adequate land has limited their farming activities which in turn have limited their income such that over 80% of the people are living below poverty line. This situation of poverty have subjected the people to low quality of life leading to several conflicts due to less access to land, unemployment, out migration among others. Addressing the problem of access to land on the Mambilla plateau will enable farmers produce enough food to overcome poverty, migration and their consequences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following policy recommendations are proffered to provide sustainable rural development on the Mambilla plateau for a better quality of life.

1. Educating and encouraging the adoption of improved farming system for a better yield and to reduce the prevailing pressure on land.
2. The government should come up with land policy that will provide enough land for both crop production and animal rearing on the plateau.
3. There is need for establishing skills and entrepreneurship/development centres for the people in human and capital development, away from crop production and animal rearing with a view to improving their capabilities in diversifying into other gainful enterprises and hence bettering their quality of life.
4. There is the need for the farmers in the area to be encouraged to form cooperative societies, farming groups and other self help activities with a view to overcoming their difficulties for better quality of life.

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