

Sustainability Strategies Adopted by Community-Based Women Organizations (CBWOs) for Improved Livelihood and Rural Development Projects in Imo State Nigeria

Oparaojiaku, J.O¹ and Ekumankama, O.O²

¹Department of Agricultural Extension and Management, Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo, Ohaji, Imo State

²Department of Rural Sociology and Extension, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria

***Corresponding Author:** Oparaojiaku, J.O, Department of Agricultural Extension and Management, Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo, Ohaji, Imo State

ABSTRACT

Community based women organization (CBWOs) are a vehicle of development both in the rural, urban and semi-urban areas of Nigeria. They provide services to better people's lives where and when the governments failed to provide them with such services. These services need to continue to be used by people without damage or risk to anyone. This study identifies the projects/services provided by the CBWOs in Imo State and the strategies employed to ensure their sustainability in terms of services provision. A total of 120 CBWOs was selected from 12 LGAs in Imo State to achieve the objectives of the study. Data collected with the aid of a questionnaire were analyzed using percentages presented in frequency tables. Results revealed that CBWOs carried out several projects such as supply of input (90.4%), disbursement of soft loans to members (90.4%), provision of ICT training (92.8%), construction of houses for widows (65%), and provision of water boreholes (75%) among others. To ensure sustainability of the projects and services, the following strategies were employed – participatory project selection (100%), early project design and implementation (100%), annual contribution (95%), drawing a solid financial base, engaging volunteers, boosting existing external relations.

Keywords: Community, women, agriculture, organization, rural life

INTRODUCTION

Poor performance of government in meeting the socioeconomic needs of citizens has been identified as one of the reasons behind the proliferation of communitybased organizations (CBOs) in the new millennium. Along this line, Wahab (2000) observed that people in developing nations have until recently looked up to their governments to meet their basic socio-economic demands. Of a truth, governments in African nations have evolved both top-down and bottom-up approaches to achieve sustainable development of their people. These include establishment of lead industries at key centers so as to create job opportunities, provide basic infrastructure and utilize regional natural and man-made resources to stimulate growth and economic development that would spread to lagging regions (Abegunde, 2003).

Besides, Agbola (2002) noted that successive Nigerian governments have responded to both rural and urban problems by evolving poverty

alleviation programmes to help stir development simultaneously at the grassroots. These programmes include the national directorate of employment (NDE), community banks, directorate of foods and rural roads infrastructure, better life for rural women, national poverty alleviation programme (NAPEP) among others.

The failure of governments' top-down approach and lack of involvement of the people at the grassroots in the bottom-up strategy have weakened the confidence of the public in central authorities. Communities therefore seek solace in indigenous institutions, which pressurize government for attention to development problems in their communities and/or undertake development programmes and projects that they observe that are very needful in their immediate communities. The indigenous organizations are associated with self-help (Ogundipe, 2003). They constitute the media for resources mobilization to confront local challenges.

Sustainability Strategies Adopted by Community-Based Women Organizations (CBWOs) for Improved Livelihood and Rural Development Projects in Imo State Nigeria

These include the finance and execution of projects, lobbying and nomination of representatives to government offices to air their views and press their needs and developing of human resources against future developmental needs of their immediate communities. Thus, their impacts have been felt in the areas of economic development, policy matters, health and infrastructure, environmental and physical development among others (Akinola, 2000; Onibokun and Faniran, 1995). The question of maintaining the above projects becomes an issue of concern in Nigeria.

Community based programs (CBPs) may contribute to sustainable community development by using local resources and by improving transparency and equitably distribution the benefits of development while, on long term may improve living standards and quality of life in the involved communities. Community based programs are increasingly scrutinized in the literature literature (Argaw, Fanthahunand Berhane, 2007; Bennett, Singh, Ozawa,Tran, and Kang, 2011) in the broader context of non-profit sector sustainability (Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, Orzan, and Marin, 2017; Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, Bogdan and Radulescu,2018).

There are several reasons why program sustainability is important: (1) terminating an effective program leads to negative effects for both the community involved and for host organization; (2) program initiation costs are high; and (3) community experiencing unexpected program termination lose trust when future programs are to be introduced (Shediak-Rizkallah, Bone, 1998). Simultaneously, community based programs sustainability is a major concern for many non-profit organizations, and especially for community based women organisations (CBWOs) (Gruen, Elliott, Nolan, Lawton, Parkhill, McLaren, Lavis, 2008). Various studies indicate that around 40 per cent of all such programs terminates in their first few years of implementation, after the initial funding is discontinued, leaving community needs unmet. To generate and achieve the expected impact upon targeted community, a community based program must sustain itself.

Unfortunately, sustainability is seldom included in the program planning (Sridharan, Go, Zinzow, Gray, Barrett,2007) while evaluation traditionally focuses on immediate outcomes, often neglecting long term sustainability

(Glasgow, Vogt, Boles, 1999). Various frameworks and models are used by non-profits, aimed to create and support the process of sustainability (Glasgow, Vogt, Boles, 1999). Without focus on assessing the sustainability, the intended impact will be affected.

Sustainability of a project here simply implies the continuation of project activities and sustenance of project outcomes after the initial/primary grant expires. It means continuing to perform and deliver project benefits to the primary target group after the funding from a donor terminates. In other words, sustainability is to maintain and continue your efforts after the funding is over.

One has to understand that sustainability requires long term planning to facilitate diverse donor engagement and for improving institutional capacity of the target population. Sustainability planning is an important step for nonprofits as it prepares an organization to deliver positive outcome in the absence of primary funding. The main objective of this research work is to identify sustainability strategies employed by CBWOs to ensure the survival and continuation of rural projects for the benefits of all.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Imo State. Imo has three Agricultural zones namely Owerri zone, Orlu zone and Okigwezone.

Two stage sampling technique was used in selecting CBWOs. The first stage involved the random selection of four local government areas from each of the zones, to give a total of 12 local government areas. In the second stage, 10 communitybased organizations were randomly selected in the following arrangements –4 Women groups, 3 – community development unions and 3 – Co-operative societies to make up the required 10 Community Based Women Organizations per local government. On the whole 120 community-based organizations were used for the study.

A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed. Data were collected by use of structured questionnaire and interview schedule and analyzed using percentages presented in frequency table.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Projects Undertaken by Cbwosin the Area.

Data in table 1 shows the rural development projects of CBWOs in Imo State, Nigeria. The

Sustainability Strategies Adopted by Community-Based Women Organizations (CBWOs) for Improved Livelihood and Rural Development Projects in Imo State Nigeria

result showed that the CBWOs undertook the following projects supply of farm inputs (90.4%), disbursement of soft loans to members (93.6%), agro processing (92.0%). The high percentage response here suggest that most rural women depend on farming for their livelihood and thus benefit from provisions to improve their living standard. The result is in line with Effiong, Ayanam and Umoh, (2012) who found that rural women are engaged in agricultural and marketing activities in Nigeria. Other projects include construction of rural toilet facilities (93.6%), flood control/drainage ways (65%), community halls construction (97.6%), ICT training (92.8%), women skills training (77.5%). This Okoroafor and Nwaobiala (2014) affirmed that women view acquisition of skills as a means of increasing output and income. The CBWOs investment in Adult Education (93.6%) could be from the fact that education is a major requirement necessary in all areas of human endeavor/development, especially when it comes to reading, community marketing and non-marketing information to members and non-members. Consideration was also given to widows as houses were constructed for them (65%), construction of market stalls (69.2%), provision of water boreholes (75%) and rehabilitation of school buildings(71.6%).

Table 1: CBWO Projects in the Study Area

Projects	*Frequency	Percentage (%)
Supply of farm inputs	108	90.4
Disbursement of soft loans to members	108	90.4
Construction of rural toilet facilities	112	93.6
Flood control/drainage ways	78	65.0
Community halls construction	117	97.6
Construction of houses for widows	78	65.0
Provision of adult education	72	60.0
ICT training	111	92.8
Women skills acquisition	93	77.5
Agro processing facilities	110	92.0
Construction of market stalls	83	69.2
Provision of water boreholes	90	75.0
Rehabilitation of school buildings	86	71.6
Adult education	112	93.6

*Multiple responses

Sustainability Strategies Employed by Cbwos in the Study Area

The result of analysis on sustainability strategies adopted by CBWOs shows that 100% of CBWOs in Imo participated in project selection, in early project design and implementation. This underscores the importance of every member as a major stakeholder in the sustainability of project. The study also shows that 100% of

The above findings agree with Abegunde, (2009) who did a work on the role of community based organizations in economic development in Oshogbo, Osun state, Nigeria. He found out that CBOs embarked on several projects to improve lives of people. These include constructions of roads, community hall, king's palace, electricity, flood control, schools, agriculture, public toilet, houses and potable water (well, bore-holes), 2 community halls and market stalls in years 2001 and 2003 respectively and 2 public toilets completed. Other community projects developed by the CBOs in the study area include donation of land for the construction of schools, health-centre. CBOs in the study area had given out loan to members and members of the public on housing construction in times past respectively. In financing community development projects, CBOs agreed that they did team with other CBOs to achieve community goals while 62 (44.3%) of them used money saved in the CBOs' purses. In addition, 98 CBOs (70%) combined their efforts with public fund raising while 63 (45%) of them worked on members to mobilize resources to develop community project.

CBWOs have in place available monitoring and evaluation committee in Imo. This could be the role they play especially in ensuring judicious use of funds, and enforcing the right use of materials and standards. Other major strategies included availability of long term vision programme, proper communication/outreach, multi-stakeholder dialogue workshops, diversifying funding sources, forming

Sustainability Strategies Adopted by Community-Based Women Organizations (CBWOs) for Improved Livelihood and Rural Development Projects in Imo State Nigeria

partnerships and drawing a solid financial base plan. These all have 100% responses. The Table also shows that 91.7% of the CBWOs in Imo State adopted location of project to areas of most importance/need. This measure would ensure the acceptance/ownership of the project. In addition, 66.7% of the CBWOs in Imo State adopted the strategy/measure of employing members of the community especially on agricultural sector respectively. This measure would ensure the livelihood source of the women and consequently bring about the sustainability of the project.

As shown in table 2, 86.7% of the CBWOs in Imo State indicated that rotation of project management team and engaging volunteers are measures adopted in order to sustain agricultural and rural development projects. These measures could be due to the inclusiveness of the stakeholders as well as to allow for greater participation. It is also observed from the table that 95% of the CBWOs in Imo State had annual contribution to the project and boosting existing relations with other agencies, in order to sustain the projects. These measures could be to ensure that project is not starved of funds at any phase of implementation. However, CBWOs had less than 50% on the following measures, available supervision by government and community leadership, set up of special maintenance fund and collaboration with other NGOs and donor agencies in Imo State. This could be due to

nature, scope and organizational structure of the CBWOs.

For sustainability of the CBWOs programmes, Hanson and Salmoni,(2011) opined that the importance of the following competencies; Coordinator competence which describes the ability of community based program coordinator to set up realistic goals and develop plans for CBWOs program. Coordinator competence is particularly important in recognizing existing capacity and for engagement in the participatory process. Transparency, describes the informing of community based program's stakeholders of the results of program processes and outcomes using recognized and suitable methods. Staff involvement and integration, describes the inclusion of qualified staff in all stages of the community based program.

Responsivity is the ability of the program to adapt to meet the continuous changing of community needs. Program funding, describes the availability of the financial resources for community-based project (Montemurro, G.R.; Raine, K.D.; Nykiforuk, C.I.; Mayan, M. (2014). Program theory, describes the existence of a clear and coherent framework for the CBWOs in terms of, for example, target population, community needs or expected outcomes. Program effectiveness, describes the capability of CBWOs to document its success and disseminate it among stakeholders.

Table 2: Sustainability Strategies Adopted by CBWOs

Strategies employed	Frequency	Percentage
Participatory project selection	120	100
Early project design and implementation	120	100
Available monitoring and evaluation committee	120	100
Available supervision by govt/community leadership	50	41.7
Set up of special maintenance fund	55	45.8
Location of projects in areas of need/importance	110	91.7
Provision of employment to members of community	80	66.7
Collaboration with other NGOs/donor agencies	30	25.0
Rotation of project management team	104	86.7
Annual contribution to projects	114	95.0
Availability of long term vision programme	120	100
Proper communication/outreach strategy	120	100
Multi-stakeholder dialogue workshop	120	100
Diversifying funding sources	120	100
Forming partnerships	120	100
Drawing a solid financial base plan	120	100
Create inventory of resources	80	66.7
Engaging volunteers	104	86.7
Boosting existing relations	114	95.0

Decision rule: Mean 2.50 and above accepted

CONCLUSION

CBWOs fill roles government could not in terms of infrastructure provisioning. They provide services needed by rural dwellers, such services as farm input supply, market stalls construction rural toilet construction, houses for widows, flood control among many others. The following sustainability strategies were employed – proper communication strategy and outreach, multi-stakeholder dialogue, participatory project selection, design and implementation among many others.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abegunde, A.A. (2003). "Rethinking Polarization of Raw-Material Inputs to region Centers: A Panacea to Rural Economic Development". *Environment and Behavior*. Adekunle et al (eds) EBAN. pp. 315-324.
- [2] Abegunde, A.A. (2004). "Community Based Organizations in the Sustainable Development of the Rural Area of Atiba L.G.A., Oyo State. *J. Inst. Town Plan.* 17: 1-14
- [3] Abegunde, A.A. (2009) The role of community based organizations in economic development in Nigeria: The case of Oshogbo, Osun state, Nigeria. *International NGO Journal Vol. 4 (5)*, pp. 236-252
- [4] Agbola, T (2002). "The Privatization and Management of Urban Space: A Critical Assessment of Neighbourhood Vigilante groups in Ibadan". IFRA, Ibadan (Forthcoming)
- [5] Argaw, D.; Fanthahun, M.; Berhane, Y. (2007) Sustainability and factors affecting the success of community-based reproductive health programs in rural Northwest Ethiopia: Original research article. *Afr. J. Reprod. Health*, 11, 79–88.
- [6] Akinola, S.R. (2000). "Balancing the Equation of Governance at the Grassroots". Adebayo A. and Bamidele, A. (eds) *People-Centred Democracy in Nigeria?* Heineman Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc. pp.
- [7] Bennett, S.; Singh, S.; Ozawa, S.; Tran, N.; Kang, J.S. Sustainability of donor programs (2011) Evaluating and informing the transition of a large HIV prevention program in India to local ownership. *Glob. Health Action*,
- [8] Downey, L.H.; Castellanos, D.C.; Yadrick, K.; Threadgill, P.; Kennedy, B.; Strickland, E.; Bogle, M. (2007) Capacity Building for Health through Community-Based Participatory Nutrition Intervention Research in Rural Communities. *Fam. Community Health*, 33, 175–185.
- [9] Effiong, E. O., Ayanam, B. M. and Umoh, G. S (2012). Analysis of performance of cooperative cassava farmers in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwalbom State, Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Agriculture, Food and Environment*, 8(3): 39-46
- [10] Estabrooks, P.A.; Smith-Ray, R.L.; Dziewaltowski, D.A.; Dowdy, D.; Lattimore, D.; Rheume, C.; Wilcox, S. (2011) Sustainability of evidence-based community-based physical activity programs for older adults: Lessons from Active for Life. *Transl. Behav. Med.* 1, 208–215.
- [11] Ceptureanu, S.I.; Ceptureanu, E.G.; Orzan, M.C.; Marin, I. Toward a Romanian NPOs Sustainability Model: Determinants of Sustainability. *Sustainability* 2017, 9, 966.
- [12] Ceptureanu, S.I.; Ceptureanu, E.G.; Bogdan, V.L.; Radulescu, V. Sustainability Perceptions in Romanian Non-Profit Organizations: An Exploratory Study Using Success Factor Analysis. *Sustainability* 2018, 10, 294.
- [13] Gruen, R.L.; Elliott, J.H.; Nolan, M.L.; Lawton, P.D.; Parkhill, A.; McLaren, C.J.; Lavis, J.N. (2008) Sustainability science: An integrated approach for health-programme planning. *Lancet* 372, 1579–1589.
- [14] Glasgow, R.E.; Vogt, T.M.; Boles, S.M. (1999) Evaluating the public health impact of health promotion interventions: The RE-AIM framework. *Am. J. Public Health*, 89, 1322–1327.
- [15] Hanson, H.M.; Salmoni, A.W. (2011) Stakeholders' perceptions of programme sustainability: Findings from a community-based fall prevention programme. *Public Health*, 125, 525–532
- [16] Montemurro, G.R.; Raine, K.D.; Nykiforuk, C.I.; Mayan, M. (2014) Exploring the process of capacity-building among community-based health promotion workers in Alberta, Canada.
- [17] Okoroafor, K. M. and Nwaobiala, C. U. (2014). Effectiveness of Cassava Women Processors in Value Addition Technologies in Abia State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Agricultural Science, Research and Technology in Extension and Education Systems (IJASRT in EESs)* www.ijasrt.webs.com 4(3): 137 – 142.
- [18] Ogundipe, AO (2003). "The Challenge of Community Development in Ijebu, Ogun State, Nigeria". *Ogun J.* 16: 5–8
- [19] Onibokun, A.G, Faniran A (1995). *Community Based Organizations in Nigerian Urban Centres – "A Critical Evaluation of their Achievements and Potentials as Agents of Development"*. Centre for African Settlement studies and Development, Ibadan, Nigeria: a Monograph series
- [20] Sridharan, S.; Go, S.; Zinzow, H.; Gray, A.; Barrett, M.G. (2007) Analysis of strategic plans to assess planning for sustainability of comprehensive community initiatives. *Eval. Program Plan.* 2007, 30, 105–113. *Health Promot. Int.* 29, 463–473.

Sustainability Strategies Adopted by Community-Based Women Organizations (CBWOs) for Improved Livelihood and Rural Development Projects in Imo State Nigeria

- [21] Sarriot, E.G.; Winch, P.J.; Ryan, L.J.; Edison, J.; Bowie, J.; Swedberg, E.; Welch, R. (2004) Qualitative research to make practical sense of sustainability in primary health care projects implemented by non-governmental organizations. *Int. J. Health Plan. Manag.* 19, 3–22.
- [22] Scheirer, M.A. Is sustainability possible? (2005) *Am. J. Eval.*, 26, 320–347.
- [23] Shediak-Rizkallah, M.C.; Bone, L.R. Planning for the sustainability of community-based health programs: Conceptual frameworks and future directions for research, practice and policy. *Health Educ. Res.* 1998, 13, 87–108.
- [24] Wahab, B. (2000). “Sustainable Community Development Project Approach in Osun State, Nigeria, in the new Millennium: The Need for Project Planners at the Local Government Level”. Paper Presented at the Workshop on Urban Planning and Sustainable Development in Osun State Local Governments held in Osogbo, Osun State.

Citation: Oparaojiaku, J.O and Ekumankama, O.O, “Sustainability Strategies Adopted by Community-Based Women Organizations (CBWOs) for Improved Livelihood and Rural Development Projects in Imo State Nigeria”, *International Journal of Research in Agriculture and Forestry*, 7(11), 2020, pp. 32-37.

Copyright: ©2020 Oparaojiaku, J.O and Ekumankama, O.O. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.