



# Motivations for Beneficiaries' Participation in Community-Based Agriculture and Rural Development Program in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explored the motivations for beneficiaries' participation in community-based agriculture and rural development program among Guba farmers in Nigeria. Utilizing qualitative research approach, the data for the study was collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussion based on semi-structured questions from 8 key informants. The data collected was analyzed through open-coding system. Findings of the study indicates that though, several reasons have been identified by informants as their motivations to participate in the program, the desire by beneficiaries to meet tangible material benefits stood above all other considerations. However, Group leadership, Workshops and Seminars, the program's approach, Officials / beneficiaries' relationship and publicity given to the program were also found to have motivated beneficiaries' participation. At the end, the paper made recommendations to practitioners and policy makers in designing future developmental programs that ensures popular participation. This will in the long run ensure the sustainability of the programs and effective poverty alleviation.

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## Introduction

Community-based development (CBD) approach refers to development programs which actively include beneficiaries in their design and management (Mansuri and Rao, 2003). This implies that contrary to the conventional top-down approaches where beneficiaries are often considered as objects in the development process for the achievement of some predetermined objectives, in community-based development approaches, beneficiaries are considered to be subjects in the development process by fully involving in decision-making process on matters affecting them. The recognition of the importance and the perceived benefits derivable from beneficiaries' participation in the development process led to increasing interests in participatory processes and outcome of programs integrating participation in its processes (Silverman, 2005).

Being the most populous nation in sub-sahara Africa, the current population figures of Nigeria stood at 150 million people (FRN, 2009). However, in spite of abundant human and natural resources, 92 percent of Nigerians currently survive on less than \$2 daily, while about 71 percent survive on less than \$1 per day (UNESCO, 2010). This is an indication of wide spread poverty in the land. According to the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), as at the time when Nigeria got independence in 1960, only 15 percent of Nigerians are living in poverty. This percentage gradually increased to 28 percent in 1980 and by 1996 the figure had gone up to 66 percent. The current poverty level of poverty in Nigeria stood at 70 percent (CIA, 2010). From 1977 to 1999 no fewer than five (5) national anti-poverty programs have been initiated and implemented in Nigeria with a view to improving the living conditions especially of the rural poor thereby moving out of poverty. These were; the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and the Green Revolution Program (GRP) introduced in 1977 and 1980 respectively to improve the general agricultural

sector with a view to alleviating poverty. Others were the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) of 1986, the People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN) 1989 and the Community Banking System (CBS) of 1999. These programs could not make significant impact in improving the living conditions especially of rural dwellers due to poor motivations which resulted in non-involvement of beneficiaries in the development process (Kakwenda, 2000; Ogwumike, 2002; CBN, 1998). The persistent failure of the programs to ensure sustainable poverty alleviation programs in the past gave birth to the implementation of the current community-based agriculture and rural development program that came into being in 2003. The program is financed by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the seven participating states drawn from semi-arid zone of Northern Nigeria towards alleviating poverty. As enshrined in the article establishing the program, the program sought the participation of beneficiaries in the development process in order to achieve its objective of empowering them to manage their own future development (IFAD, 2001). Participation is a process through which stake-holders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affects them (World Bank, 1994). Ayee (2000) has observed that participation is closely linked with poverty and social exclusion. He maintained further that participation of the disadvantaged in the development process invigorates efforts at self-help which would in the long run alleviate poverty and encourage the growth of democratic institutions. Furthermore, lack of it [participation] in the society is said to be one aspect of poverty (Platt, 2006).

The mid-term review of the program carried out in 2006 relying on statistical and econometric designs reported an impressive beneficiaries' participation in the program. However the underlying reasons that motivated beneficiaries'

participation in the program remains elusive. As observed by Uphoff (1977) that to merely say there was participation in a particular program is not enough. We need to know who, why and how participation has occurred. The need for in-depth study to understand what motivated beneficiaries' participation in the program therefore, became imperative. It is against this background that this study was conducted to explore what motivated beneficiaries' into participation in the program.

### **Theoretical framework**

As this study attempts at exploring what motivated beneficiaries' participation in rural antipoverty program that sought the participation of beneficiaries in the development process, consideration of social exchange theory in this study will provide a general insights into what motivates peoples' behavior to embark on a certain action.

Based on the works of Homans (1958), Blau (1964), the social exchange theory is concerned with the exchange of both tangible and non-tangible resources that occurs as a result of interaction between and among individuals. Social exchange theory posits that the relationship between individuals is by and large determined by the perceived cost/benefit analysis of that relationship. The relationship between beneficiaries and the development agency in this case is not an exception. For example, when beneficiaries realized that the cost of their participation is far outweighing the expected benefits they can derive may decide to cease participation in the program. According to Homans (1958), the main thrust of social behavior lies in the exchange of both tangible and intangible material benefits. While tangible benefits include items such as monetary rewards, the intangible resources are innate qualities such as new knowledge and skills and self-confidence. Furthermore, social exchange refers to relationships that entail unspecified future relationship (Blau, 1964).

Although, there are no universal factors motivating beneficiaries' participation in the development process due to context-specific nature of individuals, communities and programs; beneficiaries are motivated into participation based on their individual convictions. Hence, the main thrust of this paper – to explore what motivates participation among beneficiaries participating in community-based agriculture and rural development program in Gu ba.

Empirical evidences abound as to what motivates beneficiaries' participation in the development process. For instance, in a study of stakeholder's participation in rural development project in Northern Ghana, Boakye-Agyei (2009) found that one of the most important factors motivating people to participate in development projects is the desire to get tangible material benefits. Similarly, Friedman (1992) found that one of the most important factors motivating people to participate in any development program is 'economic rationality' which is dependent on the outcome of cost-benefits analysis. From a different perspective however, whereas Friedman was emphasizing on economic rationality, on the other hand, Clever (1999) suggested the motivations for participation to include social considerations. These social considerations according to him are intangible benefits such as the need for self respect and recognition. Hildyard et al, (2001) maintains that if stakeholders involved in development processes are really concerned with issue of sustainability and poverty reduction, it is imperative to prioritize the development of the oppressed and marginalized groups. This involves a careful examination of their training techniques and internal hierarchies which are crucial for respect of other peoples' opinions. Furthermore,

Berends (2009) in a study on peoples' participation in Mongolia, found that prior publicity accorded to the program and the cordial relationship that existed between program officials and beneficiaries have motivated beneficiaries' participation in development project.

### **Methods**

This study was carried out from May – July 2010 among Guba irrigation farmers being participants/beneficiaries in the on-going International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) assisted Community-Based Agriculture and Rural Development program (CBARDP). Guba community is situated 14.1km south-west of Baomari along Gashua-Baomari federal highway. Baomari is 132 km north of Damaturu, capital of Yobe state. Lying within the semi-arid zone Sahel savannah zone with annual rainfall of less than 250mm (IFAD, 2001), the area experiences two main seasons – the rainy and dry seasons. The rainy season usually starts around July – November with the rest 7 months of the year experiencing dry season. The resultant effect of rainfall shortage is low agricultural productivity and land degradation due to desertification. According to interview with the program planning officer, the cumulative effects of these contributed to widespread poverty in the area as majority are subsistent farmers. based on interview with the village head of Gobi, the community has an estimated population of 4,000 people out of which 70 percent are predominantly farmers. The major food crops cultivated in the area include maize, millet, sorghum and beans.

Using qualitative research approach to explore the motivations for beneficiaries' participation in the program, data for the study was collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussion based on semi-structured questions. Qualitative method of inquiry was considered in this study because of its strengths in capturing expressive information about beliefs, values, motivations and feelings underlying behavior which cannot be determined by quantitative data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Interviews and focus group discussion are the most widely used technique in collecting qualitative data (Grover and Vreins, 2006). A total of eight (8) key informants were purposely selected out of 408 farmers based on their experiences of participation in the program. All key informants are participating in the program for at least four years and have in one way or the other benefited in the program as a result of their participation. This category of informants provided primary data for the study. The process of data collection consisted of individual in-depth interviews with all the eight (8) key informants and two (2) focus group sessions comprising four participants each. Consideration of focus group discussion in this study served the dual purposes of feed-back process in the data collection as well as triangulating the data collected through individual interviews. In addition, interviews with the village head of Guba, the program planning officer (IFAD) at the local government program coordination unit (PCU) and the State Program Coordinator at the state support office (SSO) in Damaturu, provided secondary data for the study. The researcher presided over the entire focus group discussion sessions as the moderator with the help of interview assistant. All responses from informants were collected using a voice recorder and field note book with the consent of informants. However, the desire of this study to explore motivations of beneficiaries' participation in the development process being a complex social phenomenon not only informs the choice of case study approach, but case studies are suitable methods in reporting qualitative findings (Yin, 2003).

The data collected was transcribed and analyzed using open-coding system. Findings of the study were presented descriptively using pseudonyms according to themes that emerged on the basis of informants' interview.

### Results and Discussion

Qualitative research approach was employed. All informants that provided primary data for the study were males and their ages ranged from 45 to 70 years and had experiences of participation in the program for at least four (4) years. Informants were asked about what motivated them into participation in the program. Findings of the study are presented thematically based on interviews. While some informants expressed multiple reasons to have motivated their participation, others were simply motivated by a singular factor. Generally, the desire for meeting tangible material benefits stands out as the most important motivation for beneficiaries' participation in IFAD/CBARDP.

**Desire to meet tangible benefits:** Beneficiaries desire for meeting tangible benefits was the most prominent factors that featured among informants to have motivated their participation in the program. In the words of one of the informants *"the free seedlings of economic trees like Gum-Arabic distributed to farmers will go a long way in supplementing my already dwindling income"* (Yusufbe). Guba community has for long being face by serious desertification problem and coupled with inadequate rainfall led to devastating consequences on the income of farmers. this situation according to farmers have forced them in search of other sources of income as explained during interview thus; *"the situation in the community is getting worse every day. Agricultural activity had seriously declined and therefore, the need for other sources of income became imperative. IFAD has now come with the opportunity to us and we cannot afford to miss it"* (Modurambe). The findings of this study in this respect supports Homan's (1958) social exchange theory which posits that the main thrust of social behavior lies in the exchange of both tangible and intangible material benefits. Beneficiaries have realized that the benefits to be derived from participation outweighed the cost and hence their conviction to participate in the program in order to meet tangible benefits associated with participation. Furthermore, the finding is also consistent with Friedman's (1992) that the most important factor motivating beneficiaries' participation is economic rationality.

**Group leadership style:** As beneficiaries' participation in the program was based on group membership, the formation of different groups under the umbrella of farmers' organization was encouraged. The formation of these groups saw the emergence of elected officials to run the affairs of the groups. This according to informants have not only helped in entrenching democratic values in the conduct of group affairs, but also endeared beneficiaries to remain more committed towards the activities of the program as explained in the following ways; *"our group leaders gave equal opportunities to members. For example, they [leaders] adhered to rules of first come, first served in the disbursement of revolving loans"* (Balle), while another informant stated that; *"they shared responsibilities based on consensus rather than unilateral assignment"* (Gana). It was also found that apart from good leadership provided by group leaders as beneficiaries' representatives with the development agency, other extra-program activities such as members attendance to informal adult education activities were encouraged as stated thus; *"Apart from program activities, group leaders usually organized fund-raising to members when the need arises, share important information that will improve*

*our worth as farmers"* (Karambal.). This finding goes further to confirm the postulations of social exchange theory that interactions between and among people leads to exchange of ideas capable of determining individuals' behavior towards embarking on certain action and is consistent with the findings of Boakye-Agyei (2009) that good and democratic leadership of community groups motivated beneficiaries participation in rural development program in Northern Ghana.

**Workshops and seminars:** Being part of the initial program's activities to sensitize communities on the importance of and the benefits associated with participation in the program, regular workshops and seminars were organized at the community level by program officials of IFAD. The manner, in which these workshops and seminars were conducted according to informants, had significantly encouraged them to participate in the program. For example, an interview with informant took the following response; *"the sessions were lively and speakers were so demonstrative in such a way that we understood what they were teaching us"* (Ba'anziye) and another informant stated that; *"the workshops were not only educative but also encouraging towards improving our capacities. The knowledge gained through the workshops had prepared us towards participation"* (Modurambe).

The conduct of seminars and workshops organized by program officials as part of the training activities was seen by beneficiaries to provide avenue for the development of skill-based knowledge that is worth beneficiaries' investment of time and energy. Furthermore, demonstration of hospitality and generosity by program officials in the conduct of these seminars and workshops has undoubtedly enhanced the zeal of beneficiaries to remain committed towards the activities of the program. This finding is in line with Hildyard, et al (2001) who maintained that a careful consideration of beneficiaries' training techniques is imperative when it comes to issue of sustainability and poverty reduction.

**Programs' approach:** As a community-based development approach, the IFAD/CBARDP adopted the community-driven development strategy in identifying the needs and priorities of the community towards designing its intervention programs. This is where the program officials together with the community leaders and various heads of interest groups in the locality were consulted on the types of intervention areas most preferred by the community. Thus, informants stated that the strategy adopted by consulting them before implementing intervention projects was not only endearing but has motivated them into participation in the program. While responding to researchers' questions an informant observed that; *"this is the first time when people in the community were consulted on the kind of project intervention that is most preferred by the people. We felt being recognized and we accepted the program too"* (Yusufbe).

It was found that the cooption of trained indigenous people as community-driven development trainers at the community level has not only made comprehension of the training workshops and seminars easier to beneficiaries due to familiarity between beneficiaries and officials, but has equally foster a sense of belonging that eventually attracted and retained beneficiaries with high sense of commitment towards the program as observed by informant; *"we like the way our indigenous people were employed as our trainers in the program. This has certainly attracted a lot of us to the program"* (Karambal). This finding supports the reciprocal aspect of the social exchange theory that reciprocity should form the basis of any relationship arising out of interaction.

Otherwise, the tendency is the development of apathy on the part of beneficiaries towards the program.

**Officials / beneficiaries relationship:** The relationship existing between program officials and beneficiaries has been identified by informants as one of the factors that influenced their decision to participate in the program. This they said has not only motivated them into participation in the program but also encouraged them to remain with zeal and commitment. Particular reference was made to the planning officer of the program whom they described as dedicated to the program and friendly to all members of the community. While describing these relationships informants stated that; *“they are honest, helpful and accommodating. Apart from the program activities, they usually attend community functions such as wedding and naming ceremonies”* (Baram),.... *“you can hardly differentiate them from beneficiaries unless being told because they have identified very well with beneficiaries, we go to the field together in their official car, at times they come with food from the cities and we eat together and in most occasions they eat the food that was prepared in the community”* (Gana).

**Publicity:** One other reason that featured from interviews to have motivated farmers into participation was the publicity of the program carried out by IFAD officials in the community. The intensive publicity and community sensitization carried out to explain the objectives and the benefits to be derived by participating had significantly created awareness in the community on the importance of joining as participants of the program. While describing how this publicity campaigns on the program were carried out in the community and the way it has motivated beneficiaries participation informants observed that; *“the melodious jingles used in advertizing the program during market days and through radio attracted my attention and later developed interest in the program”* (Gana) and also; *“the logo of the program portraying a farmer gradually moving out of poverty was so appealing and convincing* (Modurambe).

The latter two findings are consistent with Berends' (2009) study on peoples' participation in Mongolia in which the cordial relationship between program officials and beneficiaries and the publicity accorded to the program were found to have influenced the decision of beneficiaries to participate in the program.

## Conclusion

This study explored the factors motivating beneficiaries' participation in the on-going community-based agriculture and rural development program among Guba farmers in Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that although, several factors have been identified by informants to have motivated them into participation, but the desire of beneficiaries to meet tangible material benefits in the program pre-dominates all other considerations. However, other factors such as group leadership styles, the regular workshops and seminars organized to inculcate the spirit of skill-based knowledge, the community-driven development strategy adopt in the program, the cordial relationship that existed between program officials and beneficiaries as well as the publicity given to the program at the on-set were found to have influenced the decision of the farmers not only to participate, but remain with commitment in the program. This particular important conviction to participate in the program might have arisen out of two reasons; first, because of the programs' objective to reduce poverty and secondly, the socio-economic background of beneficiaries that indicates widespread poverty which was aggravated by desertification. This condition seriously affected agricultural production that consequently affected income generation of farmers.

As beneficiaries participation determines the success or otherwise of development programs in terms of its sustainability, findings of this study has succeeded in highlighting the factors that can assist stakeholders involved in the program to particularly pay attention to areas that can influence the decisions of beneficiaries to participate more in the program. Similarly, academicians, researchers and program developers involved in designing poverty reduction programs will find the study useful. As this study was based on focused on Gu ba farmers, the findings are not generalized but rather, to understand how complex social phenomena occurred in that particular setting. This notwithstanding, the findings may however be generalized to other areas sharing similar socio-cultural and economic conditions with the area of study.

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