

THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS) IN AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN FARMERS ADVANCEMENT NETWORK (WOFAN).

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Abstract

This Paper examines how Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) contributes to the agricultural and rural development in Nigeria by mobilizing women and youths to engage in agriculture and related activities. The paper contends that the local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) can play a pivotal role in agricultural and rural development as supplement to the efforts of government. The success of WOFAN offers several lessons in agricultural and rural development that can serve as a role model for all states in Nigeria. The purpose of the research is to evaluate the contribution of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to agricultural and rural development in Nigeria. The methodology involves the use of primary and secondary data sources, which entails questionnaire administration and documentary analysis on related matters. The paper concludes that for Nigeria's rural societies to benefit maximally from the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), government will increase funding to their activities to ensure sustainable agricultural and rural development. This paper recommends that government should involve the rural populace especially rural women in formulation and implementation of its policies amidst funding of relevant NGOs in order to achieve sustainable development goals.

Keywords: *Non-Governmental Organizations, Women Farmers Advancement Network, Rural Development, Agricultural Development, Sustainable Development, Development Strategy.*

Introduction

Agricultural development is the bedrock of rural development in developing countries, without it all efforts of rural development will be futile. A large majority of the farmers operate at the subsistence, smallholder level, without intensive method of agriculture. A characteristic of the agricultural production system in developing countries including Nigeria is that a disproportionately large fraction of the agricultural output is in the hands of smallholder farmers whose average holding is about 1.0 - 3.0 hectares (C.T.A, 2000:49).

In Nigeria most agricultural and rural transformation policies and programmes that have been initiated were in line with the

capitalist ideology, as most of them determined and designed by the world capitalist countries and international financial institutions, specifically World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). For example the state-wide Agricultural Development projects (ADPs) that was implemented from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. They were executed under the tripartite agreement between the World Bank, Federal government of Nigeria (FGN) and state governments. Under the agreement, the World Bank was to provide 50% of the total cost as a "soft loan", technical and expert support, while the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the state governments were to provide 25% each of the total cost (Nwulia,1986:16

cited in Abdullahi, 2011).

However, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have become an important ally in the development process of the developing countries. Activities of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) serve to mitigate the cost of developing countries' institutional weakness, which often include administrative shortcomings and inability to efficiently carry out essential development tasks, such as providing social services or protecting the environment. In late 1980s Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have grown rapidly both in numbers and in the volume of resources they mobilize. In 1987, International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) transferred about US\$5.5 billion from the industrial to the developing countries – nearly US\$1 billion more than the International Development Association (UNDP, 1990:136). Although the activities of foreign Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the developing countries have received extensive treatment in the literature, the contributions of the indigenous or local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in economic development have gone largely unnoticed. The fact is that there are hundreds of such Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) making positive contributions within their respective countries, but are not known beyond their borders. One unique aspect of these local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is their capacity to tap local human and physical resources to respond to problems rapidly and creatively. These Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are able to maintain the flexibility needed under changing circumstances (Durning, 1989:82).

Statement of the problem

Many efforts and contributions have been made by different regimes in Nigeria to develop agricultural sector and rural areas, the

result have not yielded any substantial improvement in uplifting of lives of the rural populace. The federal Government of Nigeria allocates adequate funds to the states and local government areas throughout the federation as statutory grants. The staff development and mass mobilization mechanism have been put in place in the local Governments in the country in order to boost the morale of the local citizens and hence provide all necessary needs for the betterment of the rural areas. But unfortunately the funds are been diverted for personal use by the state and local government officials (Mohammed, 2011:19).

Furthermore, in Nigeria the agricultural sector has suffered from institutional neglect. The neglect began with the discovery of crude oil in the 1970s and its dominance as a major contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the nation's economy. Attempts to revive agriculture have been largely unsuccessful. Although Nigeria previously had a strong export sector, the range and quantity of products has declined sharply in the early 1990s, only cocoa, rubber and palm products were been exported.

First, the problem of this study lies with the fact that adequate attention has not been given to the transformation of agricultural sector in line with the need of rural peoples. Second, is the problem of inadequate funding of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) i.e. they lack adequate fund to execute their developmental projects. Third, is the problem of lack of active participation of women in agricultural and community development projects.

This study also aimed to answer the following questions:

- I. To what extent does Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) contribute to agricultural and rural development in Nigeria?
- II. Which strategies Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) adopt in addressing the

problem of agricultural and rural development in Nigeria?

- III. To what extent does Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) impact positively on the lives of rural people?

Research objectives

The main objective of this study is to highlight the major role played by Non-Governmental Organizations in agricultural and rural development in Nigeria.

As a result, this research seeks:

- I. The efficient operation of development projects by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- II. The strategies Non-governmental Organizations adopt in addressing the problem of agricultural and rural development in Nigeria.
- III. The extent Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) impact on the lives of rural people.

Conceptual underpinning

Agriculture is one of the core economic activities in rural areas. Its significance in the development of rural economy cannot be overstressed. The vast majority of these immensely large groups of poor people depend primarily on agriculture to provide most of their own food supplies and any cash income needed to purchase goods and services. Even with dramatic increases in non-farm economic activity, agriculture will remain central to secure livelihoods (Peter, 2004).

However, development may be conceptualized as the process of change consciously undertaken by a people in accordance with their traditions and culture aimed at improving their living conditions. This change takes into account human factors

and the sociological characteristics of the local milieu. Hence, any development project initiated, designed and implemented for rural people by outsiders which does not take into account the aforementioned factors may be flawed, fundamentally. Agriculture and rural development policies and programmes are designed and implemented with the primary aim of transforming rural areas. To achieve sustainability in rural development, therefore, an effective agricultural structure needed to be set up, constructed for proper designing and implementation of strategies/policies meant to achieve the desired identifiable objectives. Of course this lays with the fact that implementation process generally and particularly having to do with rural development involve series of activities that require capable institutional or organizational arrangement that would work within a given framework (Aziz, 1978).

Contrary to the general believe on the timing of the crisis in the agricultural sector, studies have confirmed that the crisis in the agricultural sector started in the 1960s and got pronounced in the 1970s. The crisis started before the oil boom. Fundamentally, agricultural problems erupted as a result of the collapse of the export commodity production around the middle of 1960s, following dissatisfaction by peasant farmers with commodity board system due to falling prices. To understand the level of dependency on foreign ideas, the Michigan State University in USA, was commissioned in the 1960s to study the problem of rural development in Nigeria. Similarly, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization also conducted a study on Nigeria's rural problems. This was followed with a national seminar in Ibadan in 1971. This seminar produced a document titled, agricultural Development in Nigeria (1973-1983). The studies pointed out that the major problem of Nigerian agriculture is its traditional and subsistent character. It

recommended modernization through the dissemination of modern technologies, which was to be transferred from the developed countries. This assertion were informed primarily by the theoretical argument that emerged in western circles and which conceives agricultural development largely as a

product of the technological and institutional changes. The changes were to be achieved through investment in irrigation, crops and livestock production technologies as well as infrastructure and creation of public institutional system such as the NAFPP, ADPs, REDAs, etc.(Atim, 2010:92). Government in realizing the problems

Table 1: Estimated Capital Expenditure on Agriculture (1970-1985).

No. Of Years	Federal Government	State Government	Total
1970-1974	68,046	186,526	254,572
1975-1980	1,112,598	1,188,586	2,301,184
1980-1985	7,775,910	5,326,390	13,102,300
Total	9,56554	6,701,498	15,658,056

Source: Federal Government of Nigeria, 2nd, 3rd and 4th National Development Plans. Table 1 indicates that in those years, more capital allocations were made for agriculture and rural development.

Table 2: Capital Allocation for Agricultural and Rural Development (1986-1989).

Sub-sector	1986	1987	1988	1989
Rural Development	491,540,924	70,499,930	98,288,000	107,125,000
Agric (Crops)	215,070,350	170,680,000	213,192,000	573,125,000
Livestock	31,070,358	12,566,000	35,574,192	20,474,000
Forestry	8,000,000	41,919,000	15,785,485	17,000,000
Fisheries	5,000,000	4,419,000	13,944,000	6,375,000
Agric (Crops)	1,800,000	2,595,000	6,000,000	2,540,000
Water Resources	141,052,157	99,913,000	213,032,400	254,000,000
DFRRI	300,591,533	500,000,000	500,000,000	300,000,000
Total	1,194,916,126	865,112,930	1,095,756,079	1,280,639,000

Sources: 1986 and 1987 Figures: Union Bank of Nigeria Mic. Newsletter No.25 jan.1987,1988 and 1989 Statement of Breakdown of 1989 Budget.

Table 2 clearly shows that up to N4.4 billion was committed to the agricultural sector in four years alone. This does not include state and local government allocations for the agricultural and rural development sub-sector. Unfortunately, the level of import bills increased, thereby increasing the level of dependency on foreign products.

Coordination, mobilization and proper utilization of both human and material resources are some of the basic element necessary for sustainable rural transformation, which could not be effective without adequate organizational procedure. Thus, in as much as

some level of success need to be attained in the area of rural and agricultural sector, the strategy for the implementation of the policies designed must be effective, simply by way of an organizational adequacy. Organizational inadequacy, therefore, plays a vital role in retarding the pace of sustainable rural development. Well designed organizational and administrative procedure are indeed, necessary prerequisite for an effective strategy and which is capable of bringing about speedy and sustainable socioeconomic development (Shehu, 1989:20).

In view of important agric-structural deficits resulting from modified framework conditions, considerable efforts must be made to improve production and working conditions of agricultural and forestry holdings. This task cannot be considered done, nor is it disposable. Agriculture and forestry are still the important sectors of the economy in rural areas. As they fulfill manifold area-related tasks. They are fundamentally important for the whole of society. Arguably, agriculture and forestry constitute the major economic sectors securing the management, preservation and development of the cultural landscape as a whole. Aiming at promoting competitiveness of agriculture and forestry enterprises and advancing their active and smooth integration into a sustainable regional and community development, rural development instruments are to be used as follows:

- i. A foresighted land and soil management must prevent conflicts in land use, which increasingly interfere with the use of land for agricultural and forestry purposes. Existing land use conflicts must be settled.
- ii. The development of holdings in the new "Lander" must be effectively accompanied by the determination and reorganization of the location of property areas
- iii. Cultivated areas must be adapted to the economic requirements resulting from the continuing structural change in agriculture, according to their location, form and size and must be developed by a suitable network of roads and water bodies. The participation of farmers and foresters in the area-related promotion programs must be supported in the restructuring process.

- iv. Gains in productivity and time can free resource for non-agricultural activities and income alternatives. In addition to direct marketing, tourism and management measures in the framework of nature and landscape conservation and the provision of new services in the framework of village renewals must be facilitated. This can be done by converting use of agricultural buildings, in particular for purposes of living, commerce, trade, cultural activities or public and community life.

Theoretical framework

Moreover, the following are models for rural development base on Chinese approach developed by Lardy:

First element of the model is an equitable distribution of land and other resources. The second element of the model is the organization of rural population for collective and cooperative activities appropriate to the stage of development and to the level of technology that has been reached. The third element is the capacity of the rural population for diversifying its activities to ensure increasing social productivity in a growing population, more employment opportunities and rising incomes. Lastly, any viable framework for rural development must provide for political and administrative capacity to link the particular rural community with the rest of the economy and to resolve the conflicts which will inevitably arise between different interest groups within the community and often outside interest.

Furthermore, serious efforts are being made in China to restore creative initiative and collective self-respect in the rural society. The course has not been smooth and resistance has often caused it to veer. But the

experiences of a quarter century are instructive. Evidence is available to show that what has been possible in China is not specific to its own historical course, which in fact was as dismal as any until conscious and determined human action altered it.

However, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Base Associations (CBAs) syndicates and various other groups have historically been active towards protecting and strengthening freedoms and right to participation and towards complementing, in some cases, taking up role by the government agencies in delivering basic social services and undertaking local development activities. Success could be achieved only by creating favourable development conditions for the multifaceted rural areas where the individual projects are pooled to form a development approach combining all disciplines. This is why structural policy measures in the field of agriculture shall, for instance, be closely linked to regional industrial and transport policies and to environmental and employment policies to form a regional strategic concept. It is only with the help of such an independent, integrated and sound policy that success in rural development can be achieved (Mohammed, 2012).

Research methodology

This paper relies on utilization of a broad range of primary and secondary data sources. The primary data entail the use of questionnaire. A total of 150 questionnaires were administered through a systematic random selection, in which 100 were administered on smallholder farmers in rural areas, and 50 questionnaires were distributed to the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) under the auspices of the Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) in 12 selected local government areas of Kano, Jigawa, Katsina and Sokoto States. The data

collected were presented and analyzed. However, the secondary data source entails documentary analysis of related matters. This includes the use of books, journals, newspapers/magazines, internet materials, etc, to extract basic facts related to the subject matter.

Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN)

In an attempt to bridge the gap between men and women farmers in Nigeria, various women groups and organizations have emerged. Such groups and organizations have contributed substantially to the gains women farmers have recorded and the voice that they now have in the overall national policy on agricultural development. One of such groups is the Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN), a private initiative founded in the early 1990s whose headquarters situated at Yahaya Gusau road Kano, Nigeria. Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) work with 250 women groups in five different states in northern Nigeria in an effort to mobilize and train rural women in the management of information and communication. Community participation is their key strategy. The Network also organizes a weekly radio broadcast that features the efforts of rural women. The main thrusts of Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) include:

- a) Providing a forum through which members of rural Nigerian communities can express themselves.
- b) Encouraging the formation of commodity groups to garner access to agricultural credit and insurance facilities.
- c) Introducing labour-saving technologies, including modern farm implements and the use of solar energy.

Initially, Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) helped women farmers in rural areas with issues of health and agricultural technology. It has since inevitably expanded to address other needs. However, in a bid to improve income and to better the livelihoods of rural women peasant farmers in northern Nigeria, Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) sensitizes and encourages rural community members to form community group/cooperatives in order to address issues that affect their well-being and scaling from subsistence farming to a more sustainable income generating activity (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009).

Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) in collaboration of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) Kano office, have trained 120 members of the women farmers groups on groundnut and cowpea production under strip cropping in its demonstration farm located at Dawakin kudu Local Government Area of Kano State. During the training, women were enlightened on the various advantages of production under strip cropping over that of traditional inter-cropping system. Strip cropping has some advantages such as sole crop practices (fertilizer application, pest and diseases management) and adequate sunlight which are factors for yield improvement. At the end of the training, the Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) made provision for improved varieties which includes IT93K-452-I, IT277 and SAMNUT-22, SAMNUT-10 which are high yielding and drought tolerant to the women farmers that are currently adopted within the farmers' community in 4 Local Government Areas of Kano state.

In collaboration with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) also trained 12 women groups in Kano and Katsina States on processing of cowpea and soybeans into

nutritious household foods such as soybeans milk, soybeans pap, soybeans scramble, soybeans cake, soybeans soup, baby food, and a variety of cowpea foods. Women and youth groups have adopted most of the projects, thereby generating daily income, opened up market outlets and developed strategies of monitoring market prices such as to maximize soybeans products as well as package cowpea seed multiplication.

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Agricultural and Rural Development

The role of national and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in reaching the rural population in Africa is being increasingly documented. The importance of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to rural people varies from country to country, and does their focus on rural issues. The position and capability of women groups meeting the challenges of agricultural development cannot be overemphasized. Women make significant contribution to food production and processing, but men seem to take more of the farm decisions and control productive forces. In Nigeria, women play dominant role in agricultural production, their active participation in African agriculture is also not new. This was confirmed by a study financed by the United Nation Development Project (UNDP), which revealed that women make-up 60-90% of the agricultural labour, depending on the region and that they produce two-thirds of food crops. Women in Africa have generally been known to play an important role in small-scale traditional agricultural production.

However, the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in agricultural and rural development includes the following:

1. Boosting the income-earning capability of women farmers, empowering them to be part of the

- decision- making process.
2. It contributes substantially to poverty alleviation, notably in rural areas.
 3. Improve food supply and supplement the staple food needs of the farm family while also reducing malnutrition among children.
 4. Contributes to economic development of the nation, bringing about improved household food security.
 5. It promotes the political and economic empowerment of rural people.
 6. Promotes equitable access to land and secured right to land which are essential prerequisites to enable small scale farmers to benefit agricultural development.

Discussion and Analysis of Data

Table 1: With regards to the formation of cooperative societies to benefit from WOFAN soft loan and grant.

Agree	70%
Disagree	30%
Total	100%

Source: Field study 2013

Agree	75%
Disagree	25%
Total	100%

Source: Field study 2013

Agree	90%
Disagree	10%
Total	100%

Source: Field study 2013

Agree	75%
Disagree	25%
Total	100%

Source: Field study 2013

Table 5: On provision of portable drinking water in rural area

Agree	80%
Disagree	30%
Total	100%

Source: Field study 2013

However, this paper discovered the active role played by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in agricultural and rural development in Nigeria in a large measure. Base on the data collected and analyzed in the above tables, Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) contributes to the development of agriculture in rural areas in Nigeria. With regard to the formation of cooperatives societies in rural area, 70% of the respondents agreed that they benefited from the grant and soft loan provided by Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN). In relation to the improved varieties of seedlings, 75% of the respondents agreed that they received a new seedling from Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) free of charge. With regard to the production under strip cropping system, 90% of the respondents from rural communities agreed that they received training on strip cropping from Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs). In its effort to improve income and better livelihood of the rural populace, 75% of the respondents agreed that they benefited from the Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) economic empowerment program which enables them to set small scale businesses.

In addition, the paper discovered that over 30 formal and non-formal primary schools and learning centers in Sokoto State now have access to portable drinking water, courtesy of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project co-funded by the Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). One of the main aim of WASH project, is to improve livelihoods by providing access to portable drinking water through the provision of boreholes equipped with hand pumps and specially designed concrete slabs. As has become widely known and accepted, improving access to portable drinking water and better sanitation can reduce

diseases. This is why the provision of safe drinking water is a major aspect of the WASH project. And it is why boreholes equipped with hand pumps have now been provided in close to 20 primary schools and non-formal learning centers in 5 selected Local Government Areas of Sokoto State. The 5 Local Government Areas are; Bodinga, Kware, Shagari, Silame and Wamakko Local Government Areas. Moreover, access to safe drinking water will reduce incidence of water borne diseases in benefiting communities thereby reducing the occurrence of absence from school due to illness. It will also increase school attendance as children would spend less time looking for water. The 24 communities identified in the project plan for the first phase of the WASH project were covered within the first six months of the project year. However, in order to expand access beyond the 24 communities identified in the PMP, the Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) started providing boreholes in other communities of Katsina and Jigawa States with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) project family. By the end of the year, the number of boreholes provided in schools had increased to 31. In addition to the 31 schools, the WASH project also provides boreholes in about 15 clinics and health posts across the benefiting communities.

Conclusion and recommendations

The contribution made by the Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) to agricultural production and rural development in Nigeria has impacted positively on the lives of rural dwellers. It should be noted that the Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are the instruments through which the rural communities can develop and bring about general development of the country. Against this backdrop, agricultural and rural development faces the greatest challenges, these include: Supporting

agriculture and forestry, Regional and community development, Securing durable conservation of natural life support systems. Buttressing the economic strength of the rural areas and creating jobs are decisive factors for the development of rural areas. This requires; efficient and competitive market oriented and environmentally sound agricultural sector, job alternatives, efficient and demand driven infrastructure, attractive living and healthy environment. The survival and sustenance of agriculture in Nigeria, as well as in Africa, rest squarely on the rural people. Therefore, they deserve to be given due recognition as far as decision- making process in agricultural sector is concerned.

Consequently, this paper recommended that it is necessary for the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to cooperate with and complement the efforts of government. And they must not subject their operations, finance and activities to governmental control and manipulation. For Nigeria's rural societies to benefit maximally from the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), government and donor agencies should increase funding their activities to ensure sustainable development at grassroots level. The view and opinions of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and rural people need to be appropriately utilized in the course of implementing agricultural and rural development programmes by the government.

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