

ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY VILLAGE ALIVE WOMEN ASSOCIATION TO RURAL WOMEN IN IFELODUN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Recent changes in the social and economic conditions of many nations of the world have led to the on-going special attention being focused on the role of rural women in development. As a result of these strategies, the research was initiated to study the analysis of services provided by Village Alive Women Association (VAWA) for the rural women in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. This study focus on demographic characteristics of the beneficiaries, services provided by VAWA, attitude of rural women towards the VAWA services, level of participation of rural women, constraints facing the rural women and the benefit derived by rural women from the VAWA services. Information required for this study was obtained through the use of interview schedule which include open and close ended questions. Four villages were selected one of which 102 respondents (10% of the whole population) were randomly chosen to form the sample for the study, the result indicated that most of the respondents are young adult women between the ages of 18 – 30 years. Most of them had no formal education. The findings using Chi-square and Correlation analysis showed that stenographic characteristics of the respondents are significant with the services of VAWA to the rural women. It was confirmed that the respondents have a favourable attitude, level of participation, constraints and benefit derived towards VAWA services and they are more willing to continue with the activities of VAWA. In view of the above, the study recommended that money and other necessary technologies should be made available to the hardworking Rural women of Nigeria by different NGOs and Voluntary organizations so that they can increase their productivity those government organs or agencies (ADP, MANR, NCAM) set up to ameliorate the hardship of rural women should realize their potentialities ad come to their aid with incentives. Further research shall be conducted to look at the analysis of each of the VAWA services and the impact of governmental and non-governmental organizations assistance to income generating activities of women in the rural areas.

Key Words: Services, Village Alive Women Association, Adult, and Rural women.

INTRODUCTION

Women as a group suffer a series of deprivation, discrimination and degrading practices. They have been victims of different forms of injustice in the cultural and economic settings of Nigeria. They have been marginalized in policy and in decision making processes. Women suffer most of the economic, political and educational problems. Especially in the rural area of the country women have been found to engage in more than two income generating activities, so as to cope with the present economic situation (Saito and Weidemann; 1990).

Women have always contributed to the socio-economic life of their communities. The socio-economic contribution of rural women to agricultural production in terms of food

production is significantly important and very substantial when we consider the extent of their involvement in farming activities and other related activities such as processing, transportation and marketing of farming. Their roles have been identified as crucial not only in agricultural production, but also in household management and other socio-economic dimensions.

History of Village Alive Women Association (VAWA)

The Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI) has the mandate to provide management intervention in the agriculture and rural development sector with a view to enhancing the performance of the sector. As a means of achieving its mandate, ARMTI engages in the following activities: Provide management training; Conduct special and diagnostic studies; Provide consultancy services, and Disseminates management information. In pursuance of its mandate to provide relevant management interventions for the development of the agriculture and rural sector, the institute conducted a socio-economic survey of women in four villages around ARMTI, namely; JIMBA-OJA, KABBA-OWODE, IDOFIAN and ELERINJARE.

In awareness of the increasing relevance and contributions of women to agriculture and rural development sector, ARMTI has participated in a lot of gender related activities with a view to encouraging the women and improving their lot. In the course of doing this, its staff has visited a few of the developing countries to see and compare notes on issues related to rural women and development. One of such visits was to Bangladesh, which has made a great success of rural credit scheme through the GRMEEN Bank Poverty Alleviation Programme. Indeed ARMTI'S mandate for the development of management capabilities to improve the living standard of the rural people necessitated the search for new approaches to improve the management of village projects and the totality of village life. The VAWA programme is to be used as social laboratories through which some of the ideas of management intervention could be effectively experimented. The programme, which will have a comprehensive development approach, is an action research and will serve as a social laboratory for both the training and research functions of ARMTI. The success will be replicable in other places, this being a pilot project for now. ARMTI will then become a training centre for staff of both governmental and NGOs from various locations within the country and also other countries of the world where this type of programme is to be established. Also, ARMTI will serve as a coordinating training ground for mobilizing credit for the development of various income-generating activities for women involved in the programme. Already, the World Bank has shown some interested in the establishment of the VAWA programme. it is hoped that the world bank, ILO and the commonwealth secretariat with their interest in gender issues will be willing to support the programme, should the experiment becomes successful. The programme has several components and it cuts across several governmental organizations. Relevant organization will be invited to participate right from the onset and ARMTI will provide the needed management interventions and leadership training for the women, ARMTI will also facilitate access to enabling factors for income generation.

In many developing countries including Nigeria, a number of rural development programmes have been embarked upon. Some of these development programmes are agriculture oriented, while others are non-agricultural. These development programmes were established with the aim of raising the living standard of rural people. Despite these efforts, several studies have continued to indicate the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of development programmes in Nigeria rural communities (Olayide 1995, Akpabio, 1982, Ewuola 1992 and Olujide, 1999). Considering the huge resources involved in this project, there is need for new interventions.

VAWA was set up as an NGO with the primary aim of alleviating poverty at grass root level and to improve the living standard of the rural woman. After the critical look at the organization's scope of operation and its crucial role in the development of rural women, this study considered it necessary to analyze the service of the organization and examine the extent to which it's objectives toward the development of rural women and their communities are being met. The general objective of the study is to analyse the services provided by VAWA to rural women in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State.

The specific objectives of the study were to identify the demographic characteristics of the respondents; investigate the services of VAWA to rural women in the study area; determine the attitude of rural women towards VAWA services in the study area; assess the level of participation of rural women in VAWA services in the study area; examine the constraints faced by beneficiaries in VAWA services; determine the beneficiaries' perception of benefit derived from VAWA services.

Hypotheses

Ho₁ – There is no significant relationship between demographic characteristics (Age, Educational Level, Marital Status, and Income) and VAWA services.

Ho₂ – There is no significant difference in the service of VAWA to the rural women in the villages.

Ho₃ – There is no significant relationship between the attitude of rural women and VAWA services in the villages.

Ho₄ – there is no significant relationship between the level of participation of rural women and VAWA services in the villages.

METHODOLOGY

The area covered by the study is located in Ifelodun L.G.A. of Kwara. It is made up of 4 villages Area that is Jimba Oja, Kabba-Owode, Elerinjare and Idofian. Six villages were identified for the VAWA programme out of which four were selected for the study. These villages which are the immediate adjoining communities to ARMTI were selected because of their proximity to ARMTI and the need for the institute to use such villages as social laboratories for its training programmes. The villages selected are Kabba, Owode, Jimba Oja, Odofian, and Elerinjare all in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. From the list obtained from ARMTI, ten percent of the beneficiaries of the VAWA programme were randomly chosen to form the sample for the study. This makes a beneficiaries sample size of 102. The beneficiaries were selected through systematic sampling with a random start.

Information required for this study was obtained through the use of interview schedule. The interview schedules included open and close ended questions. The questions were measured, the variables that are related to the objectives of the study. Data collected was analysed by the use of frequency, percentage, chi-square and correlation analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-30	38	37.3
31-40	24	23.5
41-50	20	19.6
51-60	16	15.7
60 and above	4	3.9
Total	102	100.0
Marital status		
Married	92	90.2
Widowed	10	9.8
Total	102	100.0
Religion		
Muslim	78	76.5
Christianity	19	18.6
Traditionalist	5	4.9
Total	102	100.0
Educational Level		
No Formal Education	62	60.8
Adult literacy	10	9.8
Primary Education	12	11.8
Secondary Education	10	9.8
Tertiary Education	2	2.0
Total	102	100.0
Major occupation		
Farming	25	24.5
Trading	46	45.3
Tailoring	10	9.8
Fishing	7	6.9
Knitting	5	4.9
Hired Labour	5	4.9
Firewood seller	4	3.9
Total	102	100.0
Income		
Less than 100	5	4.9
100-499	21	20.6
500-999	31	30.4
1000-5000	5	39.2
Total	102	100.0

The finding showed 37.3 percent of the respondents are between 18 – 30 years, 31 – 40 years were 23.5 percent, 19.6 percent were between 41 – 50 years while 15.7 percent falls between 51 – 60 years. Also, 3.9 percent are between 60 years of age and above. The result showed that majority (37.3%) of the respondents are young women. They are active and have potential to develop themselves through VAWA Services.

Figure 1 showed that majority of the respondents are married (90.2%), while 9.8 percent are widowed. The cultural settings in these areas I gathered do not allow or permit cases of divorces or separations. The cultural settings in these areas I gathered do not allow or permit cases of divorces or separations. This may account for the low percentage of single women as seen in the communities, even widows are compelled to remarry, only the very old women are allowed to remain single. Marital status influences level of responsibility since as was found out, women are usually the one who cater for the children. It also showed that majority of the respondents are married (90.2%), while 9.8 percent are widowed.

Religion is a total way of life, is expected to play an important role in guiding the activities of the rural women. Table 1 also showed that 76.5 percent of the respondent were Muslims, 18.6 percent were Christians while the Traditionalist were 4.9 percent. The findings showed that majority of the respondents were predominantly Muslim. Respondents were categorized into six, based on the level of education they possessed. The findings showed that 60.8 percent of the respondents have no formal education, 9.8 percent had adult literacy, respondents with primary school certificate constituted 11.8 percent, 9.8 percent attended secondary school. This finding confirmed with Simon (1995) who reported that there are high rate of non-literate women in rural areas.

Table 1 also showed that 24.3 percent of respondents are farmers, 45.3 percent are involved in trading activities, 9.8 percent are tailoring, those who engaged in fishing are 6.9 percent, 4.9 percent of respondents involved in Knitting work and hired labour respectively, while firewood sellers constituted the remaining 3.9 percent about 70 percent of the women engaged in more than one type of activity which is made possible as most of the activities are “petty” with low capital base. The finding conformed with Mabogunje (1989) who reported that many activities of women in rural areas are seasonal, with low capital and low technological base. The high number involved in trading goes further to confirm the inclination of women in this area. The findings showed that 4.9 percent of respondents earned less than ₦100:00 in a month, 20.6 percent falls between ₦100:00 – ₦499:00 earned in a month, 30.4 of respondents got ₦500:00 – ₦999:00 per month, 39.2 percent earned ₦1,000:00 – ₦5,000:00 as their monthly income while the remaining 4.9 percent of respondents earned more than ₦5,000:00. The finding showed that most of the respondents engaged in more than one income generating activities with the help of Rural Credit Scheme provided by VAWA authority. About 44.1 percent of respondents earned of ₦1,000:00 to ₦5,000:00 and above monthly, this subsequently increased their living standard.

VAWA SERVICES

Village Alive Women Association (VAWA) Services provided for Rural Women are showed in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of VAWA Services Provided for Rural Women in Ifelodun L;.G.A. Kwara State

VAWA Services	Yes (%)	No (%)
1. Rural enterprise development	81.4	18.6
2. Rural credit scheme	93.1	6.9
3. Skill development training and Adult education	80.4	19.6
4. Rural health and nutrition education	81.4	18.6
5. Formation of women group and cooperatives	98.0	2.0

Table 2 showed that 81.4 percent of respondents were aware of Rural Enterprise Development while 18.6 percent were not aware of the VAWA Services. 9.1 percent of respondents aware of Rural Credit Scheme while the remaining 6.9 percent were not aware of the VAWA Service. Skill Development Training and Adult Education is made-up by 80.4 percent respondent that were aware of the VAWA Service, and 19.6 percent were not aware. Also, 81.4 percent were aware of the Rural Health and Nutrition Education while 18.6 percent were not aware, 98.0 percent of respondents were aware of the formation of Women Group and Cooperatives while 2.0 percent of respondents were not aware. The finding showed that two of the five VAWA Services, Rural Credit Scheme (93.10%) and formation of Women Group and Cooperatives (98.0%) are much aware of the VAWA Services.

Table 3 Frequency distribution of respondents towards VAWA Services.

Attitudinal Statement	SA(5)	A(4)	U(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	Remarks
Credit Scheme is Adequate	25.5	71.6	1.0	2.0		4.22	Agree
Credit Scheme is timely	-	2.9	4.9	59.8	32.4	1.76	Disagree
Training Method is Appropriate	36.3	40.2	20.6	1.0	1.0	4.11	Agree
Training Method is ambiguous	4.9	1.0	10.8	39.2	44.1	1.80	Disagree
Training Method is relevant	74.5	24.5	1.0			4.75	Agree
Vawa Services are regular	77.5	21.6	1.0			4.78	Agree
Vawa Services are beneficiary	91.2	2.0		4.9	1.0	4.79	Agree
Vawa Services are problem	2.9	9.8	1.0	33.3	52.9	1.75	Disagree

oriented							
Vawa Services are truly academically	38.2	54.9	1.0	0	5.9	4.20	Agree
Vawa Services are should be increased	60.8	30.4	3.9	1.0	3.9	4.44	Agree
Vawa Services should be reduced	1.0	1.0		15.7	82.4	1.19	Disagree

Table 3 showed that for each of the attitudinal statement, the means score of the respondents were obtained and the overall opinion of the respondents are determined by the mean score. The finding showed that VAWA members agreed that credit scheme is adequate (97.1%). Training method is appropriate (76.5%) Training method is ambiguous (5.9%). Training method is relevant (99.0%) credit scheme is timely (92.9%), VAWA Services are regular (99.1%) VAWA Services are beneficiary (93.2%), VAWA Services are problem oriented (12.7%), VAWA Services are truly academically (93.1%) VAWA Services should be increased (91.2%) and VAWA Services should be reduced (2.0%). These statements does satisfied the majority of the respondents, and the finding\’s showed that the percentage of respondents that disagree with the statements were new members of VAWA.

Table 4: Level of Participation of Rural Women

Distribution of the level of participation of respondents in VAWA activities

Types of Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Cash Donation	32	31.4
Financial Contribution	2	2.0
Leadership Roles	6	5.9
Decision Making	10	9.8
Giving Advice	10	9.8
Physical Execution	14	13.7
Meeting Attendance	28	27.4
Total	102	100.0

Table 4 showed that 31.4 percent of the respondents are not participating in VAWA activities, which on 2.0 percent are participating in only activity. These activities are cash donation, financial contribution, leadership roles, Decision making, giving advice, physical execution and meeting attendance. Also, 5.9 percent are contributing in two of these activities, 9.8 percent are contributing in three activities and another 9.8percent are participating in four of these activities. Also 13.7 percent are contributing in five of these activities while 27.4 percent are participating in all six activities. One can deduce from table 4 that the level of participation of respondents is very high, the result showed that majority of the respondents (98%) are participating in two or more activities while only 2 percent are participating in only one of the activities. This may imply that one of the criteria for being a member of the union is readiness to be effectively involved in all the activities of VAWA.

VAWA SERVICE CONSTRAINTS

Table 5: Constraints Faced by the Respondents in VAWA Services

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inability to attend meeting	15	14.8
Transportation	10	9.8
Lack of labour and Infrastructure	4	3.9
Coordination and management	3	2.9
Tribal Sentiment	-	-
Total	32	31.4

The findings showed that 14.8 percent of respondents were not able to attend meetings regularly due to unforeseen circumstances beyond their control such as sickness, traveling and attending ceremonies, 9.8 percent of respondents indicated that transportation problem is the constraint facing them because of the distance from their village to the meeting centre. 3.9 percent are lacking labour and infrastructure this constrains involve dry season vegetable production farmers vegetable production is in respondents indicate coordination and management as constraints facing them, while there was no response for tribal sentiment which shows that there was discrimination among the registered member of VAWA.

BENEFITS DERIVED FROM VAWA SERVICES BY RURAL WOMEN

The benefit derived from VAWA Services by rural women are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Benefits derived from VAWA Services by rural Women

Benefits Derived	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Through rural credit scheme	51	50.0
Formation of women groups and cooperatives	38	37.3
Rural enterprise development	10	9.8
No response	3	2.9
Total	102	100.0

Table 6 showed that 50.0 percent of rural women have benefited from VAWA Services through Rural Credit Scheme, 37.3 percent of respondents also benefited from VAWA Services through the formation of women group and cooperatives, and 9.8 percent of respondents benefited from the services of VAWA through Rural Enterprise Development while 2.9 percent of the respondents showed no response. The finding showed that majority of the respondents (97.1) have benefited from the VAWA Services in the area of rural credit scheme, formation of women group and cooperative and Rural Enterprise Development.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho₁ - There is no significant relationship between demographic characteristics (age, educational level, marital status) and VAWA beneficiaries.

Table 7: Chi-square test the Significant Relationship between Demographic Characteristics and VAWA Services

Variables	X ² Values	DF	P	CC	Decision
Marital Status	12.97	2	0.002	0.33	Significant
Religion	2.85	2	0.24	0.16	Not Significant
Educational level	24.13	5	0.002	0.44	Significant
Occupation	12.68	5	0.02	0.33	Significant
Income	42.31	4	0.00	0.54	Significant

Table 7 showed the chi-square test of the significant relationship between selected demographic characteristics of respondents and the services of VAWA. Chi-square analysis revealed that marital status is significantly related to VAWA Services. This revealed that marital status is related to VAWA services. For religion, the significance value (0.24) is greater than 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis, which states there is no significance relationship between religion of respondents and VAWA services will be accepted. This showed that religion of respondents has no influence nor related to VAWA services. Chi-square analysis revealed that Educational level is significantly related to VAWA services. This implied that educational level is related to VAWA services. For occupation, significance value (0.02) is less than 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis will be rejected i.e. there is a significant relationship between the respondent's occupation and VAWA services. This may therefore implied that occupation has influence on the services of VAWA. For level of income, significant value (0.001) is less than 0.05, therefore the null hypothesis will be the rejected, which showed that there is a significant relationship between the level of income of respondents and the VAWA services. This may therefore implied that respondent's income level does have influence on the services of VAWA.

Table 8: Chi-square (X²) test of significant relationship between level of participation of respondents and the activities provided by VAWA.

X ² -Value	DF	P	CC	Relationship	Decision
10.70	2	0.004	0.31	Significant	REJECTED

Table 8 showed the X² test for he significant relationship between 4.2.2 showed the X² test for the significant relationship between level of participation and VAWA's activities. The significant value of level of participation (0.004) is leas than 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis will be rejected, which showed that there is a significant relationship; between the level of participation of respondents and the activities provided by VAWA.

Table 9: Correlation analysis of VAWA Services received by respondent and some independent variables

Variables	R	P	Relationship	Decision
Age	0.29	0.003	Significant	Reject Ho
Attendance	0.18	0.64	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Financial status	0.22	0.82	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Membership status	0.22	0.02	Significant	Reject Ho
Attitude	0.35	0.00	Significant	Reject Ho
Constraints	0.33	0.001	Significant	Reject Ho
Benefits	0.19	0.05	Significant	Reject Ho

Table 9 showed the correlation analysis to test the significant relationship between some independent variables and VAWA Services.

The significance value for age (0.003) is less than 0.05, therefore the null hypothesis will be rejected, this showed that there is a significant relationship between the constraints facing the respondents and the services of VAWA will be rejected. This may implies that the constraints of respondents has influence on VAWA Services. Lastly, for benefit derived, the significance value (0.05) is equal to 0.05 level of significant, therefore the null hypothesis will be rejected, this showed that there is a significant relationship between the benefit derived by the respondents and VAWA Services. This implies that the benefit derived by the respondents has influence or effect on the services of VAWA.

CONCLUSION

The study was carried out in order to analyse the services provided by Village Alive Women Association (VAWA) for Rural women in Ifelodun Local Government area of Kwara state, in an attempt to evaluate the impact Non-Governmental organization (NGOs) are making in alleviating the suffering of the rural women. The study revealed that NGOs have the potential to help rural people to help themselves through activities that could help in alleviating poverty in rural areas.

The basic assumption of the study was that rural women who are usually resource poor, lack necessary information to take vital decision to improve their condition of living and also do not have access to those government organ is or agencies, set up to ameliorate their hardship. Since rural women are known to be hard-working, it is assured that if their attitudes are changed through training and they become exposed to the wherewithal by which they can improve their conditions, they will be motivated to engage more in enterprise development and consequently increase their income to enhance their standard of living.

VAWA or any other organization have not done anything to help the people in this area despite the people yearning to be educated, the study showed that about 60.8% of the rural women are still non-literate. The study found that there was no significant relationship between the demographic characteristic of the respondents and the beneficiaries of VAWA. This is therefore probably explained why majority of the respondents have positive attitude towards the services of VAWA. The level of participation also was found to be significant to the rate of improvement in respondents income generating activities. Finally one major factor identified to be militating against the effectiveness for the association is inadequacy of fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having shed some light to the significance of the Rural Women in the socio-Economic development of Nigeria. Given the opportunity, rural women could contribute more to their own well being especially if various constraints were removed. Hence, they will be able to decide on who to approach, for what, when and what to engage in from the foregoing the following recommendations are hereby made specially it was assumed that:

- (a) If money and other necessary inputs are made available to the hard working rural women of Nigeria they can increase their productivity, sell their products whenever and wherever they can get good price, more rational decision as to how to make money from their products

- (b) The rural women should be taught the rudiments of money management, book keeping and accounting procedure. They should be educated on the borrowing and repayment schedules of banks, and have enough confidence built into them, they will be better managers, and with proper follow-up, they will be able to repay loans when such loan are given to them.
- (c) Rural women should be empowered with approaches related to group dynamics, they should be shown how homogenous groups can work together with members being interdependent on each other, purchasing their raw materials and inputs for farms operations.
- (d) Members of the group are taught how to account for all purchases done in the group, make simple budgets which they can follow religiously and implement, they will be able to improve their production, increase their field, and so improve their level of living. Above all the women will be able to build personal esteem and sustain their level of living.
- (e) If technologies (soft and hardware) appropriate to the working needs of the women are made available to them (even at a cost) they will improve the quality and quantity of their production.
- (f) Enough awareness for rural women should be created on areas of improvement particularly in their income generating activities.
- (h) Encourage dry season vegetable production to keep them gainfully employed all year round and to enhance their earning capacity. This will also help them put their idle time, at this time of the year, the dry season into gainful use.
- (i) There is the need to employ follow-up staff as coordinators to live with the rural women. This is very necessary to ensure close contact with the rural women and establish good rapport with them. A project of this type requires a content rapport which is made possible when the field staff lives among the rural women to better relate with them and study their life pattern and also keep daily record of observation failure to employ coordinators will hinder the progress of the programme.

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