

**A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF INCOME GENERATION AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING
AMONG AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN AKWA IBOM STATE**

Uche, Chima¹, Onyegbula, Francis I². and Okoko, Ediom³ U.

¹ University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

² University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

³ University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Corresponding author: chimauche77790@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study assessed gender mainstreaming and income generation range among agricultural cooperative societies in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were; to describe the socio-demographic features of the cooperative societies in the study area, identify gender roles among farmers in the agricultural cooperative societies, examine gender segregations in leadership and decision making among the various cooperative societies and comparatively assess income generating abilities in male and female led agricultural cooperative societies in the state. Data were collected using structured questionnaire administered to 100 cooperators who were selected using a two stage sampling procedure. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Z-test. It was noted that 72% of the females in agricultural cooperative societies were involved in farming activities of the cooperative societies as against 28% of the males. The study also showed that 67% of the females handled the sales of the agricultural as against 33% of the males. However, 75% of the leadership positions in the agricultural cooperatives were occupied by men. This segregation was also observed in the income generation by male and female headed agricultural cooperative societies in the State.

Key words: Gender, mainstreaming, Agricultural Cooperative society, Income

INTRODUCTION

Gender roles all over the world are dictated by social norms; hence men and women are tailored to duties, activities and behaviors the society considers appropriate. However, these roles are discriminatory as they tend to give unfair consideration to the male gender (Uche & Ajie, 2017). Roles performed by the various genders are structured by the traditional societies and constructed assumptions and perceptions of each gender's abilities and skills (Adedeji et al., 2012). The male gender contributions to the economy seem central and occupy significant sphere while the contributions of women receive less regard or attention in economic and agricultural analysis and policies (Jiggins et al., 1998). This seems to be present in agricultural co-operatives.

To address the nagging gender inequality issues, the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 at Beijing, China strongly proposed the concept of gender mainstreaming as a strategy in achieving

gender equality. Its main objective was to ensure that men and women's needs are integrated into the design; monitoring, evaluation and implementation of processes, policies and programs that enable men and women have equal benefits (Dayanandan, 2011). Gender mainstreaming is designed to identify gender gaps and consider the impact the perceived gap will have on men and women.

Majurin (2012) believes cooperative societies are effective tools in the efforts to addressing perceived gender equality issues since cooperatives offer unique opportunities in principle to members through education, training, participation in meetings and leadership positions. In spite of these principles of the cooperative societies, gender inequality persists because of social norms that assign responsibilities and leadership. Nippierd (2002) noted that women's active participation in cooperative societies is being restricted by social misconceptions in terms of roles of women in domestic responsibilities and traditional roles. Agricultural cooperative societies require land ownership in some cases for membership and this most times inhibits women's effective participations in the organization.

Some people believe gender inequality is pervasive in Nigeria because it reflects the other forms of social inequality. Different standards and measures rule gender based issues in terms of labour, resource control and distribution and responsibilities in the various cultures in different provinces in Nigeria. These gender issues must be thematically considered, we must comprehend the concept of gender inequality in our varied societies. Gender profiling in Nigerian households is highly complex in different families and cultures. These gender biases have also impacted participation in agricultural co-operative activities. Women's access to land for agricultural activities mostly is dependent on their husband's lineage group (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009). This has significantly limited their productivity and participation in decision making in agriculture-based activities because of intricate cultural norms.

It cannot be guaranteed with certainty that women will benefit significantly from initiatives in gender based pursuits in Nigeria Agricultural co-operative societies in spite of the democratic principles of the organizations. Events suggest that specific efforts must be made to ensure that women participate and gain from these principles. Gender based constraints have been observed that not only limit but also

demean women's contributions in agricultural activities. These gender based biases are the products of customs and beliefs and confine women to domestic idiosyncrasies even in agricultural cooperative societies. These cultural norms impose on women economic and domestic burdens that appear ethically unfair as observed by Uche and Ajie (2017) in Agricultural co-operatives in Rivers State, Nigeria. Moreover, there are laws, customs and other cultural creations that can limit women's access to credit and other resources. It is therefore fair to seek women's opinions on gender roles, needs and sundry activities, access to resources and constraining factors limiting women's effective participation in agricultural development. (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009).

The presence of gender considerations in the assessment of farm resources has informed criticisms in some quarters of the smallholder farm model productivity and valuation. Literature suggests a functional productivity gap skewed to favour male-headed households. Some of these gaps particularly are due to evident differences in accessing farm inputs. There are also pointers that gender differences in agricultural productivity may also have spatial dimensions linked to agro-ecology which is significant in low agro-productive regions (Anderson et al, 2018).

The clamor for gender mainstreaming in agricultural activities faces significant challenges such as differential participation in agriculture and the under-representation of the female gender in land ownership and consequently farm ownership especially in agricultural decision-making. Public policies mostly, have a patriarchal form and are superintended mainly by the male (Lombardo, 2003). Gender mainstreaming is central in achieving food security and raising agricultural productivity if we must enhance nutrition and improve on our welfare through the agricultural sector. According to European Institute for Gender Equality (2018) moves to entrench gender equality and buttress women empowerment as agricultural producers have been central to FAO goals. All these postulations suggest Agricultural development may be facing man-made Challenges in our clime. However, giving attention to the limitations confronting women is of particular importance in trying to move agricultural economy especially through the agricultural co-operatives special considering must be given to the immense contributions to the agriculture sector by women. The Agriculture value chains may be constrained by any limitation that affects women's agricultural activities because of the various productive roles they play in our traditional agriculture.

Noting the roles women play in economic development and their contributions in the Agricultural sector, their needs should be integrated into the design and planning process, policies and

programs of agricultural cooperative societies. It is on this note that this research intended to assess gender mainstreaming and income generation among agricultural cooperative societies in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Statement of the Problem

Women play significant roles in food production despite the unequal access to agricultural resources. Women produce 80% food, own 1% of land, get 7% Agricultural Extension services and receive less than 10% credit in Africa given to small-scale farmers (FAO, 2011). This skewed attention may also be limiting factors to their activities in the various agricultural cooperatives in Akwa Ibom State, since the societies thrive on pooled resources and, having less to contribute may inform relegation to the background. Ordinarily the cooperative societies should serve as platforms for women to receive equal benefits as the men based on the cooperative principles. However, Ekesionye and Okolo (2012) noted that one of the outstanding gender issues in cooperative societies is women's low level of participation representation in decision making and leadership. They have maintained a low involvement and participation in leadership of Agricultural cooperative societies (USAID, 2005). Average women membership world over in agricultural cooperative societies has been low as in Paraguayan where they had only 19% and out of 45 agricultural cooperative societies pooled in 2012, only one had a woman as a president (OBSECOOPY, 2014). Majurin (2012) observed that women made up less than 30% of the membership of cooperative societies and a lower percentage participate in leadership positions. This development may have been informed by low resource ownership as noted by Nippiard (2002) who observed that some agricultural cooperative societies require land ownership for membership and most women don't have.

In principle, laws that govern cooperative societies are gender neutral. However; the marginalization of women in our clime reinforces policy biases against them. An inclusive approach would imply equal access to participating in decision making and leadership in agricultural programs and policies. Gender equality concepts have done little to alter the male dominance of the social structure (Sheila, 2012). These observed shortcomings in the management of agricultural co-operative societies in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria informed the resolve of researchers to assess gender mainstreaming and income status of Agricultural Cooperatives in the study Area with an aim to identifying gender roles among farmers in agricultural cooperative societies.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State in the coastal south of Nigeria. Akwa Ibom State has thirty-one 31 Local Government Areas and three (3) senatorial districts. It is bordered on the West by

Rivers State and Abia State, on the East by Cross River State and on the south by the Atlantic Ocean. Agriculture supports a reasonable population of the households in the state. Fertile soil and adequate manpower create conducive environments for agricultural activities. Major crops cultivated in the state include; rubber, oil palm, cassava, plantain, and maize. Fish and sea-foods like crayfish, periwinkle and oyster are also in abundance in the state.

The population of the study is the agricultural cooperative societies in the three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State. Two stage sampling procedure was used in selecting the sample size. First, the three senatorial districts were purposively selected, secondly, registered agricultural cooperative societies were selected from the three senatorial districts using random sampling technique, out of which 100 cooperators were sample for the research. Primary data and information gotten through structured questionnaire and focus group discussions with cooperators in the various agricultural cooperative societies were used for the study. Data were analyzed with using descriptive statistics and the Z-test. Descriptive statistics mainly involved the use of means, percentages and other measures of central tendencies

Model Specification

The Z –statistic is mathematically specified as

$$Z = \frac{\bar{X} - \bar{Y}}{\sqrt{\frac{S^2_x + S^2_y}{n_x + n_y}}}$$

Where,

Z = The value by which the statistical significance of the mean difference would be judged

\bar{X} = Mean amount of monthly income generated by male headed agricultural cooperatives

\bar{Y} = Mean amount of monthly income generated by female headed agricultural cooperatives

S^2_x = Variance of Mean amount of monthly income generated by male headed agricultural cooperatives

S^2_y = Variance of mean amount of monthly income generated by female headed agricultural cooperatives

n_x = Sample size of male headed agricultural cooperatives

n_y = Sample size of female headed agricultural cooperatives

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic features of the cooperative societies in the study area

Table 1: Distribution of cooperative societies’ socio-demographic features

Socio-demographic features	frequency (n=100)	percentage
Membership Size		
1-10	10	10.0
11-20	59	59.0
21-30	28	28.0
31-40	3	3.0
Number of Males/Membership		
0	8	8.0
1-5	12	12.0
6-10	32	32.0
11-15	36	36.0
16-20	12	12.0
Number of Females/Membership		
0	6	6.0
1-5	23	23.0
6-10	45	45.0
11-15	19	19.0
16-20	7	7.0
Income ranges of coop. societies pooled (₦)		
1000-15000	50	50.0
16000-30000	28	28.0
31000-45000	8	8.0
46000-60000	10	10.0
61000-75000	0	0
76000-90000	4	4.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Membership in the cooperative societies studied was low with only 3% of the societies having up to 30 members and above. Only 12% of these cooperative societies had a male population of up to 20 as members and another 7% had the same range of number for the female gender. Savings was very low with only 4% having in their savings up to ₦90, 000. The pattern of income returns will lead to low capital

formation, low investment and low output. This implies that more capital must be injected from outside if the societies must grow as an enterprise. Generally, the picture suggests subsistence scale of activities.

Gender Roles among Farmers in Agricultural Cooperative Societies

Table 2: Gender based activity distribution among farmers in Agricultural cooperative societies in Akwa Ibom State

Gender based activities of farmers	frequency (n=100)	percentage
Regular invitation to scheduled meetings		
Male	52	52
Female	48	48
Participation in farming activities		
Male	28	28
Female	72	72
Participation in the sales of farm produce		
Male	33	33
Female	67	67

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The result shows women provided more of the labour requirement in all the cooperative societies sampled (72% in farming activities and 67% in the marketing of the societies' produce). The result agrees with Gender Assessment Report in Nigeria by DFID and CIDA (2009) which stated that about 60% of the agricultural labor force is made up of women who carry out more than 70% of the farm labor. However, females were slightly under represented in meetings where decisions were taken at 48% participation rate suggesting leadership may be with the males. This study also suggests the females; represented by 67% did more of the sales of agricultural cooperatives societies produce than the males who represented 33%. These show that despite the higher proportion of men who often attend the meetings of the agricultural cooperative societies, the women are responsible for more of the economic activities.

A large percentage of agricultural labour force in Sub-Saharan Africa is female. A recent evaluation of women's contribution to agricultural labour in crop production among six Sub-Saharan African countries

showed an estimate of about 40 per cent of the labour share. This implies that female-managed farms play valuable roles in agriculture. The study also revealed they own about 30 per cent of the farms (Magnus et al, 2018). In the case of Nigeria in particular, findings from a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) financed study has shown that women constitute 60-80 percent of agricultural labour force which however varies across the regions and produce about two-thirds of the food crops. Yet, in spite of these, men make the key farm management decisions. Sadly, female farmers in Nigeria are therefore voiceless with respect to agricultural policies. Policies, that aim at ensuring food security and production underestimate and significantly ignore women's position in agricultural production activities and decision-making process (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009).

Gender Based Participation in Leadership Positions and Decision Making in Agricultural Cooperative Societies in Akwa Ibom State

Table 3: Gender based distribution in leadership positions and decision making in agricultural cooperative societies

Gender based participation in leadership and decision making in agricultural cooperative societies		
	Frequency	Percentage
Leadership distribution by gender		
Male	75	75.0
Female	25	25.0
Equal voting rights?		
Yes	94	94.0
No	5	5.0
Democratic and equal participation in societies Programs?		
Yes	97	97.0
No	2	2.0
Dominant gender in programs?		
Male	52	52.0
Female	48	48.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The study shows the adoption and practice of the democratic principles of cooperative societies in Akwa Ibom State in the area of equal and unfettered participation in the society's programs. However, leadership is with the males (at 75%) giving them the advantage of dominating proceedings (at 52%). This development makes the females vulnerable because their interest can totally ignored. This finding agrees with Nippierd (2002) who reported that laws of cooperative societies that favor women are either

ignored or maneuvered with significant cultural norms influence. Sheila (2012) also noted that gender equality strategies have not challenged male dominance in the social structure rather it aims only at improving on women's situation in the society permitting women subordinacy to men.

T-test result of monthly income generated by Male-headed and Female-headed agricultural cooperative societies

Table 4: Results of z-test on monthly income generated by male and female headed agricultural cooperatives

Variable	N	Mean income	Mean difference	Standard deviation	t-value	p-value	Decision
Male Headed	75	24,823.33	10,623.33	19573.57	4.166	.000	Reject null hypothesis
Female Headed	25	14,200.00		5901.98			

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 4, shows that male headed agricultural cooperative societies generated more income (₦24,823.33) on the average than female headed agricultural cooperative societies (₦14,200.00) on monthly basis. This may have resulted from limited access to agricultural resources. At a t-value of 4.166 (p<0.01), the result suggests a significant difference in monthly income generated by male and female headed agricultural cooperatives in the study area. Table 4 paints the picture of a bias though the management abilities of the leadership of the societies may have impacted profits; however, access to resources is a significant suspect considering the overwhelming male dominance (and the advantage in terms of access to resources) in spite of women making the largest contributions in agricultural

activities. Ogunlela & Mukhtar (2009) citing Damisa and Yohana(2009) stated that in Anambra State, Nigeria women contribute significantly more in labour input in the farm than the males. In a seperate study in Jukun, nomadic Fulfude and the Kulka farmers, about 70 to 80% of agricultural labour input comes from the women. However major farm decisions are taken by men.

CONCLUSION

Though gender mainstreaming was applied to most of the laws and by-laws of agricultural cooperative societies in Akwa Ibom State, most agricultural cooperative societies do not still allow equal participation of men and women in leadership roles of the cooperative society and there were also

differences in the income generated by the male-headed and female headed agricultural cooperative societies. The success of agricultural cooperative societies will require a fair engagement of all genders especially women since they constitute reasonable population of the labour force. Policies and programs designed to enhance the relevance of agricultural cooperative societies should take into account the role of women. This should describe a detailed format for gender mainstreaming in all the phases of the policy process.

REFERENCES

- Adedeji, I. A., Ogunjimi, S. I., Yusuf, A., Obaniyi, K.S. & Olufunmilayo, T. M. (2012). Attitudes of women farmers towards urban agriculture in Somolu local government area of Lagos State, Nigeria. *Greener Journal of Agricultural Sciences*. 2(1):008-012.
- Andersson, A. D., Dzanku, F. M and Isinika, A. C. (2018). Agriculture, Diversification and Gender in Rural Africa: Longitudinal Perspectives from six countries. Oxford Scholarship Online, London.
- European Institute for Gender Equality,(2018). Agriculture and rural development. Gedimino pr. 16, LT-01103 Vilnius, Lithuania .
- Dayanandan, R. (2011). Gender mainstreaming through extension: Problems and prospects. *J. Altern. Perspect. Soc. Sci.* 3(3):508-660.
- DFID & CIDA (2009). Gender Growth Assessment- Nigeria. Department of Economics, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Ekesionye, E. N. & Okolo, A.N. (2012). Women empowerment and participation in economic
- Journal of Women's Studies. 10(2): 159-180.
- Magnus, J, Bustos, M. F. A and Loison, S. A.(2018). African Smallholder Farmers on the Move: Farm and Non-Farm Trends for Six Sub-Saharan African Countries, 2002–15. Oxford University Press.
- Majurin, E. (2012). How women fare in East Africa cooperatives: The case study of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The Cooperative Facility for Africa (CoopAfrica), International labor office-Daereselam, ILO.
- Nippierd, A. (2002). Gender issues in cooperatives. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization.
- OBSECOOPY Observatorio del Sector Cooperativo Paraguay (2014). Analysis of data from 2012 consensus. Asuncion, Paraguay: OBSECOOPY.
- Ogunlela, Y. I and Mukhtar, A. A(2009). Gender Issues in Agriculture and Rural Development in Nigeria: The Role of Women. *Humanity & Social Sciences Journal* 4 (1): 19-30, 2009
- Sheila, J. (2012). Man's dominion: religion and the eclipse of women's rights in world politics. Routledge. 94.
- Uche, C. & Ajie, E. N. (2017) A Survey on the Perceptions of Coperators on Gender Disparity and Financial Viability of Agricultural Cooperative Societies in Rivers State, Nigeria. *Int J Econ Manag Sci* 6: 462. Doi: 10.4172/2162-6359.1000462
- USAID, Ethiopia (2005). Evaluation of agricultural cooperatives in Ethiopia (ACE) Programme Activities. Prepared by Mitchell Group.INC., Washington, D.C., USA.
- FAO (2011). The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011, Rome, FAO. Food Organization Agency, corporate document expository (2009). The rights of self-employed rural women. Available from: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4311e/y4311e06.html> retrieved 08-04-2011
- Jiggins, J., Samanta R. K. & Olawoye, J. E. (1998). Improving women farmers' access to extension services: A reference manual. Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations, Rome, pp:73-82.
- Lombardo, E. (2003). EU Gender Policy: Trapped in the Wollstonecraft Dilemma?. European