Participatory Approach to Training Needs Analysis for Sustainable Development: Experience from Cluster Projects in Two Nigerian States

T. A. Sinkaiye* and A. O. Ajayi**
*Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. **Dept. of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology, O.A.U., Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

The study examined the sustainability of the clusters projects after the funding agencies might have withdrawn. The two clusters projects were visited to collect primary and secondary data. Specifically, the members of the clusters were taken through exercises to assess the viability and the level of autonomy of the organizations. The structure being operated by the clusters was also examined. Results of the study revealed that the areas of training needs of the two clusters varied between the clusters. The two clusters need training in fund raising, strategic planning, record keeping and human resource management. The study concludes that the clusters have the potentials of a sustainable organization if the leaders have the trainings in the areas identified. It is recommended that training should be need specific and the needs be analyzed using participatory methodologies. In order to ensure its sustainability, the involvement of stakeholders at every stage right from planning of cluster is paramount.

INTRODUCTION

The sustainability of programmes, projects and policies has become an important priority issue to stakeholders. In recent past, the emphasis of government, donor agencies and non-governmental organisations have been on development programmes and their sustainability. In essence, the planning and implementation of development programmes is expected to have in it, a plan to make the programme or project sustainable.

The New Nigerian Foundation (NNF) a non governmental organization, in conjunction with Akwa Ibom State Government established cassava cluster programme to promote economic development of the stakeholders in cassava production within the state. In addition, New Nigerian Foundation also collaborates with Bauchi State government to establish cluster programme for livestock farmers and stakeholders in the State.

The NNF and state government's initiatives on clusters posed a new challenge to the stakeholders in the respective areas. This leads to the need for constant training and retraining of leaders and actors in order to be able to effectively deal with the situations as they emerged. The most important starting point of training design is the training needs analysis. This study therefore used participatory methodologies to analyze the training needs of leaders in the cluster groups. The two programme sites were visited to examine the sustainability of the programme's using participatory approaches. The investigation eventually generated the training needs. In order to do justice to the main goal of this study, the research objectives pursued were to:

(i) identify the objectives of the cluster programmes,
(ii) examine the structure of the cluster programmes;
(i) analyze the sustainability components of the programme using participatory approach methodologies; and

(ii) identify the training needs of members for sustainability using participatory methodologies.

Literature

According to Wikipedia (2006), sustainability can be defined both qualitatively in words and more quantitatively rigorous as a ratio. Put in qualitative terms, sustainability seeks to provide the best of all possible worlds for people and the environment both now and into the indefinite future. In simple words, Brundtland (1987) defined sustainable development as the one that meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Whiteside (1998) differentiates between sustainable programme and sustainability of programmes and policies. The author opined that sustainability of programme and policies refers to the ability of a programme or services to attract sufficient political support to secure permanent (usually government) funds and/or; to find ways of covering its costs (by levying charges) to keep going. Wickipedia (2006) in a more specific term defined development sustainability as the continuation of benefits of a project after major assistance from the donor has been completed. In essence, ensuring that development projects are sustainable can reduce the likelihood of them collapsing after they have just finished. It also reduces the handing down of money at development problems and the subsequent social problems, such as dependence of the stakeholders on external donors and their resources. In sum, all development assistance, apart from temporary emergency and humanitarian relief efforts should be designed and implemented with the aim of achieving sustainable benefits.

Efforts directed at sustainability could be influenced by some factors among which are participation and ownership; capacity building and training; government policies, management and organisation; social gender and culture among others (Wikipedia 2006). The key relevant factors identified from the list are participation, training, government policies, organizational structure, management, gender and culture. Sustainability according to Ikerd (1997) is a goal to be achieved and sustainable systems must be economically viable, either by nature or through human intervention. “Sustainability concerns one of the most fundamental questions for technical cooperation; will the benefits and results achieved through the projects be maintained and enhanced by the ultimate end-users and their community, based on their own commitment and resources, after the termination of the external assistance? The question entails a complex analysis of aspects related to this broad concept, including the acceptability and use to be made of project outputs and results by the intended groups targeted their capacity to maintain the results, and the institutional and policy environment to enable them to do so.” (FAO, Agenda 21 2005).

Participation is increasingly seen as a panacea for many of the intractable problems of rural development such as providing sustainability when project funding ends; making research, extension and policy relevant to small holders, management of common pool resources, overcoming high costs of providing services to smallholders, and trying to ensure that local capacity is organized in the interests of the poor (Whiteside, 1998). In recent years, an increasing number of analyses of projects have shown that participation by local people is one of the critical components of success in irrigation, livestock, water, and agricultural sectors. (World Bank 1994, Pretty 1995). The term participation has been used to justify the extension of state control and to build local capacity and self-reliance. It has also been used for data collection and for interactive analysis. However, Rahmema (1992) opined that more often than not, people are asked or dragged into participation is operations of no interest to them in the very name of participation. Pretty and Voduhe (1997) warned that great care must be taken over using and interpreting the term.
participation. It should always be qualified by reference to the type of participation. What is important is to ensure that those shifting from the more common passive and incentive driven participation towards the interactive and self-mobilization form of participation.

The importance of training in attaining stakeholders' participation in, and sustainability of projects is enormous. Training is the process of acquiring specific skills to perform a job better (Jacious, 1963). It helps people to become qualified and proficient in doing some jobs (Dahama, 1979). This can be extended to the performance of some tasks. The training approaches identified are traditional approach, experiential approach and the performance based approach as listed by Halim and Ali (1997). Good training venture commences with training needs identification. Training need is a condition where there is a gap between "what is" and "what should be" in terms of incumbents' knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour for a particular situation at one point in time. Training needs analysis process can be divided into three distinct analytical phases viz: job analysis, task analysis and knowledge skill-gap analysis. After this stage, the selection of appropriate training method follows.

Wentthing (1992) listed four factors to guide the selection of a training method to include: the learning objective, the content, the trainees and practical requirement.

In sum, for programmes to be sustainable, there is a need for participation of beneficiaries from the onset and training for the stakeholders.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study was carried out in Akwa Ibom and Bauchi States in Nigeria. The New Nigerian Foundation (NNF) an NGO in collaboration with USAID and the respective State governments established projects for clusters. Cassava Competitiveness and Crop Livestock projects were established in Akwa Ibom and Bauchi States respectively. The two states were visited to assess the structure of the cluster projects and identify the training needs of members for the sustainability of the programmes. Secondary data were collected from record of activities. Primary data were also collected from members of the cluster as individuals and in group. They were taking through self assessment exercises on viability and autonomy of organizations as established and standardized by Gubbels and Koss (2000).

Participatory learning and action (PLA) approach was adopted in the collection of the data and analysis. The fieldwork was carried out between 13th and 18th October, 2005 in Akwa Ibom State and 3rd 9th November 2005 in Bauchi State. The data collected was analysed to identify the training needs of leaders and members. The underpinning concept was sustainability of the projects. In the process, members rated themselves on an agreed and well-defined five-point scale of performance. The scales are Excellent (5 points); Good (4 points); Average (3 points); Fair (2 points) and Poor (1 point). The mean rating was analysed and presented in tables.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Organizational Structure**

The structure being operated in the two projects were critically examined. Evidence from the information collected revealed that the Akwa Ibom State Cassava Competitiveness Cluster has executive committee at the apex. The sub-clusters at the zonal level are to be responsible to the committee. The executive committee members were to be elected from the zonal level. The members at the grassroot were to constitute an Annual General Meeting (AGM) which is the highest decision making body. The
Executive Committee was to oversee the day-to-day management of the affairs of the cluster in Akwa Ibom State.

The organization as at the time of this study was being financed by the NNF. There were poor membership mobilization and consequent poor financial commitment of members. The structure looks a bit complex.

The Bauchi Crop Livestock Cluster (BCLC) was designed to lay groundwork for a competitive livestock sector in Bauchi State using competitive cluster concept. The structure it operates was the establishment of cluster coordinating committee (CCC) in the state. The CCC is the apex coordinating body. Next to the CCC was the cluster union of the various sites. The cluster unions are made of representatives of the various cluster associations of the project sites. The emergence of cluster associations from the grassroots voluntarily gives the BCLC strength for operation. The mobilization of grassroots was more effective and they were able to enjoy group strength and raise funds for their registration as cooperative unions.

The structure on ground in the case of BCLC was in line with the conventional cooperatives societies. The CCC is only serving as the coordinating and apex decision making body. The CCC relates mainly with NNF and the state coordinators of the project. They however have no formalized contacts with cluster unions. The site managers relate with the cluster unions at the six project sites. Evidence revealed that the unions operate independent of each other, and this makes the coordinating role of the CCC redundant. There is a need to ensure an adjusted structure to improve the line of authority and communication within the cluster organizations to enhance sustainability.

**Sustainability components of the programme**

In order to ensure sustainability of the cluster projects, the following components were identified and discussed in Participatory Learning Action (PLA) session by members.

1. **The reasons for placing membership in the cluster projects**

   Results of the data collected revealed that members had diverse reasons to join the cluster. The reasons could support the sustainability of the projects. A summary of the reasons advanced by the members are:

   (i) to improve their capacity to manage group activities, support each other and serve as a team to improve their economic base;

   (ii) to solve problems of individuals with solutions emerging from within or outside the group;

   (iii) to be identified and recognized by implementing agencies thereby serving as a status symbol;

   (iv) to resolve the differences between the various groups in livestock business;

   (v) envisioned support for their business from the various stakeholders;

   (vi) to be involved at every stage of the project implementation as against past approaches of channeling resources through the traditional institution which were often hijacked;

   (vii) to benefit from group strength in solving common problems;

   (viii) to get support for the business of various stakeholders;

   (ix) to receive guidance towards financial and social improvement.
2. The benefits derived from the cluster thus far
The members of AISCC and BCL were also probed to identify the benefits they have
derived from placing membership of the cluster system. The result shows that they have
gained ability to mobilize support for the release of funds by funding agencies. They also
had leadership training, which impacted on the ability of apex committee members to
manage the cluster. Membership of the cluster also promotes the prompt identification of
relevant bodies that can meet their training needs.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the clusters in the two states are beneficial to the
members in many ways.

3. Results of Viability Exercise
The members were taking though an exercise to assess the viability of the clusters
which is an aspect of sustainability. The organization characteristics used were in line with
those identified and standardized by Gubbels and Koss (2000). The results from the two
states were presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Viability Status in the two States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No.</th>
<th>Characteristics of Viable Organization</th>
<th>Mean Score Bauchi State</th>
<th>Remark</th>
<th>Mean Score Akwa Ibom State</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Effective leadership</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Capacity to Raise funds</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Effective strategic plan</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>High level of participant</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Good Financial</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Clear Goals and objectives</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Good Documentation</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Effective Information flow</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key to categorization of mean scores of organizations as rated by members:

- 5.0 - 4.5: Excellent
- 4.4 - 3.5: Good
- 3.4 - 1.5: Fair
- 1.4 - 1.0: Poor
The Further
resources understand. The respective finance plan. The leadership of effective probes revealed that they do not have staff of their own and no training for staff was organized in the past. It is however important to stress that training to acquire skill, knowledge and right attitude could enhance sustainability of the cluster system.

4. **Result of Assessment of Clusters based on characteristics of an autonomous organization**

The members of the two clusters were also taken through an exercise to assess their respective organizations on characteristics of an autonomous organization. The summary of the ranking is presented in table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Results of Assessment of Clusters Based on Characteristics of an Autonomous Organization</th>
<th>( R_1 )</th>
<th>( R_2 )</th>
<th>( R_3 )</th>
<th>( R_4 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm Enterprise Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Performance (Poor)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Performance (Good)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness Performance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Performance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity for Information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of leadership</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency of operation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff skill</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial performance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The further probe revealed that they do not have staff of their own and no training for staff was organized in the past. It is, however, important to stress that training to acquire skill, knowledge and right attitudes could enhance sustainability of the cluster system.


### TABLE 2: Autonomy of Organization by State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No.</th>
<th>Characteristics of an autonomous organization</th>
<th>Assessment of Bauchi State</th>
<th>Remark</th>
<th>Assessment in Akwa Ibom</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Locally generates income to cover operation costs</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Financially sound</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Able to raise funds for projects</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Good internal management</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Purpose driven not donor driven</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Able to plan monitor and evaluate</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Able to make independent decision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Able to access technical resources when needed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Able to form and maintain collaborative relation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Key to Members’ ranking

1 = Not done at all by the organization
2 = Fair at performance
3 = Good at performance
4 = Average at performance
5 = Excellent performed

#### Cut off point for mean score

1.0 = No Performance (Weak)
1.1-2.9 = Fairly performed (Fair)
3.0-4.5 = Well performed (Good)
4.5-5.0 = Excellently performed (Excellent)

Remark in parenthesis
Evidence from the data collected showed that ability to locally generate income to cover core operation cost was rated low in both Bauchi and Akwa Ibom States. The two clusters are financially weak. This was also the case with their ability to raise funds for projects.

On good internal management, clusters in Bauchi State was rated as good, while that of Akwa Ibom State was only rated as fair. Another characteristic investigated was whether the organizations' activities are purpose driven or donor driven. Bauchi State cluster was rated good while that of Akwa Ibom was rated poor because most of their activities was donor driven and not for purpose. The two clusters had room for development in the area of programme planning, monitoring and evaluation. The ability of Bauchi clusters to make independent decisions was rated good while that of Akwa Ibom was rated as not good. The ability of Bauchi cluster groups to access technical resource when needed was rated fair while that of Akwa Ibom was rated poor because the clusters have never done this before. They relied mostly on sponsors. The two clusters were rated fair on their ability to form and maintain collaborative relationship.

From the above discussions, facts emerging showed that the characteristics of an autonomous organization used to assess the clusters by members revealed that there is a need for improvements. This is an indication that the leaders need training in order to be able to achieve the goals of the clusters and their sustainability.

5. Training Need Analysis:

The two exercises conducted in each of the states studied led to the identification of some specific training needs. The needs identified were through participatory approach. The training needs are very important to sustainability of the programme. Trainings are needed in order to make the Organization Viable.

The leaders of the clusters in Bauchi State will need training to ensure viability and consequent sustainability of the organization in the following areas:

(i) Fund raising;
(ii) Strategic planning;
(iii) Financial Management;
(iv) Documentation and Record Keeping; and

The cluster leaders in Akwa Ibom exhibits the need for training in the following areas:

(i) Effective leadership
(ii) Fund raising
(iii) Strategic planning
(iv) Participation
(v) Financial management
(vi) Documentation and Record keeping
(vii) Information flow and communication; and
(ix) Decision making process
(x) Programme planning, monitoring and evaluation
(xi) Process of collaboration Formation and Maintenance
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Facts emerging from the study revealed the following:

(i) Cluster projects in the two states have the goal of bringing stakeholder together for mutual economic benefits, empowerment and poverty reduction. Competitiveness strategy was employed.

(ii) It was found that the leaders of the organizations after about two years of operation still looked up to funding and supporting agencies for the survival of their respective organisation. This development is not supportive to sustainability of the organisations;

(iii) In order to ensure sustainability, the leaders need training to enhance their skill, attitude and knowledge on the various aspect of organizational development and management;

(iv) The identification of the specific training need is possible with the use of participatory methodologies;

(v) The sponsors, funding and supporting agencies still remain the main determinants of activities of the clusters. This situation is not supportive to the sustainability of the clusters;

(vi) Training needs varied from one cluster to the other.

From the above conclusions the following recommendations are made.

(i) The use of cluster approach to address specific problems should be with emphasis on participation of stakeholders from the onset.

(ii) The leaders emerging in the process of establishing clusters should be exposed to training on group management.

(iii) Training needs should always be specific and not generalized among existing groups;

(iv) Training need analysis should be participatory at every stage. The involvement of stakeholders. This will promote a correct identification of the training needs.
REFERENCES
World Bank (1994) Integrated Pest Management: An Environmentally Sustainable Approach to Crop Protection Agricul

INTRODUCTION

First, environmental protection as the primary objective of agricultural practices faces increasing pressure to adopt practices that are sustainable and environmentally friendly. The need for sustainable agricultural practices is evident due to several factors such as climate change, land degradation, and resource depletion. The agricultural sector is a vital component of the global economy, and its sustainability is essential for achieving environmental, economic, and social goals. Sustainable agriculture aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This requires innovative solutions to address the challenges of sustainable agriculture, including the development of sustainable crop protection strategies.

In this chapter, we will explore the key aspects of sustainable crop protection practices. We will discuss the importance of integrated pest management (IPM) and its role in promoting sustainable agriculture. The chapter will also cover the use of natural pest control methods, such as biological control, and the integration of biodiversity into agricultural systems. We will also examine the role of technology in sustainable crop protection, including the use of precision agriculture and remote sensing technologies. Finally, we will discuss the challenges and opportunities in sustainable agriculture and the need for multidisciplinary approaches to address these issues.

Throughout the chapter, we will provide examples of successful sustainable agriculture projects and practices, highlighting the importance of collaboration between stakeholders, including farmers, scientists, and policymakers. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the future directions in sustainable agriculture and the need for continued innovation and research to ensure the sustainability of agricultural systems.