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Effects of The European Union Micro Projects Programme (Eu-Mpp6) On Rural Livelihoods in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.**Owa Egbara Owa and Wisdom Egbara Owa**^{1.} Department of Political Science, College of Education, Akamkpa, Cross River State.^{2.} Secondary Education Board, Calabar, Cross River State.Email: owaegbaraowa001@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Rural livelihood is universally acclaimed to be a societal menace that requires concern, as it is mostly associated with developing countries with a large proportion of poor people. The paper sought to analyze the socio-economic effects of the European Union Micro Projects Programme (EU-MPP6) on rural livelihood in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. It sought to determine the vision of the EU-MPP6 in halving poverty or eradicating extreme poverty in tandem with attempts and realities observed in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State. Data were obtained through field observations, oral interview and validated and structured questionnaire administered on 80 randomly selected households from benefiting communities. The data collected were analyzed using percentages, frequency tables, Means And Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression technique. The results show that the projects executed in the area of the study included school blocks, health centres, water infrastructure, transport facilities and income generation infrastructure. The major effects included the provision for sustainable benchmark for quality service provision to the rural poor, the evaluation and strengthening of social cohesion among the rural people and reduction of unemployment. The indices used to determine the effects were education, age, membership of social organizations, religion, marital status, household size, occupation, militating factors and annual income of respondents. It was observed from the results that the projects faced certain hiccups like lack of adequate skills by the rural people and lack of counterpart-funding. It was recommended that attention should be focused at educating the rural people on needs assessment and project identification. That the scope of the projects should enlarge to accommodate agriculture which is the mainstay of the rural economy.

Keywords: EU-MPP6, Rural, Livelihoods, Effects, Projects.

INTRODUCTION

The rural communities in Nigeria are predominantly poor considering the indices of the capabilities, assets and activities of the inhabitants. The World Bank estimate of the rate of poverty in Nigeria indicate that over 45% of the country's population live below poverty

level of \$1 per day while about 2/3 of this group are extremely poor (United Nations Development Programme, 1996)[1]. Aigbokhan (2000)[2] observed that between 1985 -1996 an increasing number of Nigerians lived in absolute poverty, especially in rural communities. Ekong (2003)[3] opines that in a typical rural setting in Nigeria, the majority of the inhabitants derive their livelihood from peasant farming that is basically subsistence. Further, Nnadi and Amaechi, (2004)[4] asset that the condition of most rural communities in Nigeria especially the dearth of infrastructure and the high poverty level of the people have placed severe limitations in their ability to harness available resources for a sustainable livelihood.

From the foregoing, Scoones (1999)[5] argued that the concept of livelihood entails the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. He held that the ability to pursue different livelihood strategies is dependent on the basic material and social tangible and intangible assets that people have in their possession. He noted further that any effort aimed at improving the livelihood of the rural people should be directed towards empowering them to increase their farming output, or increase their ability to take up off-farm income activities, or more away to seek a livelihood either temporarily or permanently elsewhere, or the combination of the strategies. Also, that it has been observed that there are major gains to be made in the reduction of poverty by focus being directed at development programmes which will go a long way to alleviate poverty.

Reports from most countries have revealed applicable achievements in the efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but conversely, report from Nigeria seemed to indicate the contrary, as most development indicators have continued to remain in the downward of the ladder (Nebo, 2010; World Bank, 2010)[6],[7] reasons being that poor leadership, corruption, the adoption of top-bottom approach in design and implementation of most intervention programmes prolonged neglect of the agricultural sector and rural economy have been the order of the day [6],[8],[9].

Many regimes in Nigeria have therefore introduced poverty alleviation programmes to curb the menace of rural poverty, most of which lacked ecological and institutional focus and framework for implementation (Okeke, 2008; Iro, 2008)[10],[11]. The introduction of the European Union Micro Projects Programme (EU-MPP6) in Nigeria in 2003 was one of the numerous efforts to revamp the country from its rural community undevelopment quackmire and thereby place the country in a better level in the realization of development indices. The programme was implemented in six states of the Niger Delta Region; they include Abia, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo and Ondo States. The

programme was spectacular among others due to its approach as it was designed in tune with Community Driven Development Paradigm (CDDP). It also aimed at building social capital by encouraging community participation and strengthening incentives for participatory development in the rural communities. Additionally, it sought to provide support for rural people in order to improve their standard of living, through the funding of micro projects in need areas with the emphasis on bottom-top approach.

Meanwhile, the EU-MPP6 Programme endowed with fortunes on its face value, calls for the need to determine the extent of the attainments of its set goals for the target rural people. It is therefore on the above that the paper seeks to ascertain whether the vision of the programme matches the reality found on ground in the beneficiating communities in the area of study. This is against the backdrop that even when put together all the new measures seemed not to be working particularly in rural areas in the opinion of many who claim that their impact is not widely felt and worse still their existence is unknown in the vast proportion of the hinterland[11],[12],[13],[14].

The broad objective of the paper is to ascertain the extent of accomplishment of the goals of the programme at the target communities. The specific objectives of the paper were to:

- Investigate and describe the socio-economic characteristic of the benefiting communities.
- Identify community projects executed in the benefiting communities.
- Ascertain the effects of the projects on the livelihood of the benefiting communities.
- Describe the problems that militated against the execution of the project in benefiting communities.
- Suggest strategies that will enable rural communities to significantly benefit from intervention projects.

METHODOLOGY

The Methodology adopted was the survey design. Data were collected largely from primary source through questionnaire administration, personal observations and oral interviews. The questionnaires were designed for heads of household, community leaders and informants. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed for the study, where eight (8) out of the sixteen (16) communities which benefited from the project were randomly selected for the study. They include Owakade Ekpa, Idoru, Osakan, Okpangwut, Ochokwu, Ebo, Goodbye and Odonget. From the above mentioned communities, twenty (20) respondents were randomly selected from the list of heads of household that was compiled. Therefore, the sample size for the study comprised of eighty (80) respondents

selected from the communities that benefited from the projects. Data were also collected from secondary source, through journals, conference proceedings, annual reports at cetera. The data collected were analyzed with use of descriptive and inferential statistical tools which include percentages, frequency tables and mean while Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The OLS multiple regression model that best fit the study was adopted based on the highest number of significant variables, coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) and the F-value.

The model is specified thus:

$$Y = F(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6, X_7, e)$$

Where :

Y	=	Perceived project effect index
X_1	=	Age of respondents
X_2	=	Sex of respondents
X_3	=	Marital status
X_4	=	Occupation
X_5	=	Household size
X_6	=	Formal education attainment
X_7	=	Social organizational membership status
e	=	Error term

Substituting therefore:

Y	=	Indicated number of effects of the projects
X_1	=	The actual age of respondents was captured in years
X_2	=	Male = 1, Female = 0
X_3	=	Married =1,Single = 0
X_4	=	Farming=1,Others=0
X_5	=	The actual number of persons per household was captured.
X_6	=	No formal education =0, Primary =1, Secondary =2, Tertiary =3.
X_7	=	Non member=0, Ordinary member=1, Financial Member=2,committee member =3,Executive member=4.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio- economic characteristic of Respondents. Aged, sex, religion, education, marital status, household size, occupation, factors military against executing projects, annual income and social organization membership were analyzed as shown in table I below. The results revealed that 63% were farmers with 16-20 years of farming experience,

therefore constituting majority and 87% were married. Then 32% fell within 54-60 years of age. 77% were members of social organizations and 40% had basic formal education. The annual income of the respondents constituted 53%, with a mean annual income, household size, age, years of farming experience and education standing at N162,600.00, 4.49, 17, and 9 years respectively, which translate to the fact that the respondents were mostly low income earners, aged farmers who had little or no formal education. The results fell in line with the findings of other studies conducted by scholars on the socio-economic characteristic of rural dwellers in Nigeria [3], [4].

Table 1: Respondent Socio-economic Characteristics (N=80)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (years)		
<21-30	04	5.00X=49
31-40	17	21.25
41-50	17	21.25
51-60	25	31.25
>60	17	21.25
Total	80	100.00
Sex		
Male	50	62.00
Female	30	38.00
Total	80	100.00
Marital Status		
Married	69	84.25
Single	05	6.25
Divorced	05	6.25
Widowed	01	3.25
Total	80	100.00
Household Size		
1-3	33	41.25
4-6	44	55.00
7-9	03	3.75X=4
Total	80	100.00
Occupation		
Farming	50	62.50
Business	06	7.50
Public Service	05	6.25
Others	19	21.75
Total	80	100.00
Militating Factors		
Bad Governance	05	6.25
Corruption	15	18.75X=17
Poor Enlightenment	50	62.50
Funds	08	10.00

Co-operative	02	2.50
Total	80	100.00
Annual Income (₦)		
1,000.00 – 100,000.00	16	20%
100,000.00 – 200,000.00	42	53%
200,000.00 – 300,000.00	14	17% $X=₦162,600.00$
Above 300,000.00	08	10%
Total	80	100%
Education		
Tertiary	18	23%
Secondary	52	65% $X=9$
Primary	10	13%
Total	80	100%
Membership of Organization		
Members	61	76%
Non-Members	19	24%
TOTAL	80	100%

Source: Field Survey Work, 2017.

PROJECTS EXECUTED

The projects that were executed by the EU-MPP6 in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State included school blocks, health centres, construction of feeder roads and bridges. The data is shown in table II below:

Table 2: Respondents Responses on Projects Executed.

Projects	Projects Frequency	Percentage (%)
School blocks	25	63%
Health centers	50	31%
Roads and Bridges	5	06%
Total	80	100%

Source: Fields Survey Works, 2017.

From the table above, construction of school blocks constituted 63%, building of health centers constituted 31%, while the construction of road and bridges constituted 6%. Then it was observed that due to the absence of health facilities in the rural communities, the building of health centers dominated the percentage among the project executed, as high

premium was placed on primary health care of the rural communities. The dearth of schools and need for access to education was observed to be instrumental to the rating of schools blocks. However, the low level rating for roads and bridges could be attributed to the existence of access road and the presence of canoes and speed boats, which enables the rural dwellers to be conversant with the evaluation the agricultural produce to the markets.

Table 3: Effects of Projects on Rural Livelihood

Effects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Evaluation of sustainable livelihood	75	94%
Establishment of community cohesion	60	75%
Development of team spirit	70	88%
Creation of Employment	40	50%
Innovative skills and potentials	10	13%

Source: Field survey work, 2017.

Table III above indicates that 94% of the respondents were of the opinion that the project executed evolved sustainable livelihood for the rural communities, 75% were of the view that the project established cohesion among the member of the benefiting communities. The development of team spirit among the member the rural communities stood at 88%, while creation of employment opportunities had 50% support from the respondents. It was observed that on 13% were of the view that the executed projects provided opportunity for innovative skills and potentials for the rural communities. The participatory approach that was adopted by the project provided opportunity for the rural people to contribute their quota to the improvement of the people welfare. The results of the responses buttressed the consensus reached at the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). It affirmed that participation is the mode of cross-pollinating ideas to arrive at decisions which commonly affect the life of the rural communities and that it is as of right fundamental to the inhabitants of the communities and the means in which our society should be rated.

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST THE EXECUTION OF THE PROJECTS

Table IV below shows the factors that militated against the execution of the EU-MPP6 project in the benefiting communities in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State.

TABLE 4: Militating Factors Against the Execution of the projects.

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of professional skills	40	50%
Lack of Counterpart fund	38	48%
Non 60 operation	35	44%
Ignorance	02	06%
Denial	74	67%
Rigid framework	29	33%
Indifference	86	75%
Poverty	57	60%
Protracted effects of project	40	50%

Source: Field Survey Work, 2017.

From Table IV above, 50% of the respondent were of the view that lack of professional skills needed for project identification by the rural dwellers militated against the projects. Lack of counterpart funding by the rural communities constituted 48%. Non-co-operation among community members was rated at 44% against the projects, more so, ignorance and poor understanding of the potentials of the projects to be executed constituted only 6% of the respondent's opinion militating against the project. 67% of the respondents indicated that so many communities were denied the projects due to the subsistence nature of the agricultural development of the rural farmers. Further, 33% expressed that rigid framework for participation of the rural dwellers militated against the implementation of the projects. 75% indicated poor literacy levels of the rural dwellers as an impediment to the projects implementation. On the other hand, 60% were of the view that poverty in subsistence farming measures were responsible for the caused barriers to the implementation of the projects, while 50% of the respondents expressed that most of the projects only have long term effect on the lives of the rural communities. Other criteria that inhibited the rural communities from benefiting from the projects included proposal writing to indicate the viable nature of projects and registration of community associations.

Table 5: Assessment of Socio-economic variables of project Executed.

Variables	Linear Function	Exponential Function	Send- log Function	Function Double-log
Constant	5.072	4.256	1.597	10.251
X₁(Age)	-2.96E-04	0.187	-3.30E-03	0.07719
	(-0.008)	(0.162)	(-0.322)	(2.202)
X₂(Sex)	02.282	0.7719	0.116	0.098284
	(-0.557)	(2.202)	(0.824)	(0.342)
X₃(Marital Status)				
	9.484-02	-41E-0.2	0.354	0.106530
	(1.658)	(-0690)	(2.006)	(0.644)
X₄(Occupation)	-488E-02	1.058	3.249E-02	-0.48557
	(0.109)	(1.658)	(0.350)	(-2.330)
X₅(Household size)				
	-277E-02	0.141	-141E-02	0.194 605
	(-0.660)	(0.419)	(0.690)	(1.404)
X₆(Education)	-2.77E-02	1.776E-02	-4.78E-03	0.644276
	(0.879)	(0.91)	(0.548)	(9.846)
X₇(Organization) Membership)				
	-4.83E-02	0.194605	-5.82E-02	0.625747
	(-0.094)	(1.404)	(0.410)	(4-938)
R²	0.050	0.070	0.070	0.81061
R² adjusted	-0.049	-0.035	-0.027	0.85604
F-value	0.504	0.156	0.721	7.306
Variables	7	7	7	7
Observation	80	80	80	80

Source: Field Survey Work, 2017.

Lead Equation = double log function.

Table v above shows the double log model that was used to describe the relationship between the variables. The results showed that about 88% of the variation in the assessment of the effects of the projects executed by EU-MPP6 was accounted for by the joint action of the independent variable that was investigated. The coefficients relationship of the (t=2.202), occupation (t=2.330) education (9.846) and members of organization (4.938) all at (0.05 level of significance) were significant. This implies that the said variables were salient factors that influence people's perception on the effects of the project executed by EU-MPP6 of the benefiting communities under study. The result further implies that the increasing level of the quest for education in the study area increased the perception of the people on the effects of the projects on them. It favours the findings of Ekong (2003)[3]. Again, increased in level of membership of organizations favoured the increased perception of the effects of the projects on the peoples' livelihood. Ekong (2003)[3] and Aigbokhan (2000)[2] observed significant relationship between membership of organizations and the adoption of innovative skills and potentials of the people in agriculture. Nnadi and Amaechi (2007)[4] observed that farming is the major source of livelihood of the rural dwellers, that the higher the number of farmers involved, the higher the perceived effects of the projects on rural livelihoods since almost all of them form an integral part of the farming population. Furthermore, as the ages of the respondents increased, so did the perception of the projects on rural livelihoods increased. The results corroborates the findings of [3],[4].

Conversely, the coefficient of sex (t=0.342) Marital Status (0.644) and household (t=1.404) were observed to be insignificant, which means that these factors are not as important in the influence of perceived effects of the projects executed by the EU-MPP6 on rural livelihoods. The value was 7.306 and the number of variables were seven, with only four that were considered as significant. The coefficient of multiple determinations (R^2) was 0.87011, while the R^2 adjusted value was 0.85604 with 80 respondents who observed the projects.

SUMMARY

The paper appraised the effects of the EU-MPP6 projects on the livelihoods of rural communities in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River States, Nigeria. The concept of livelihood was x-rayed in the context of both theoretical and experimental discourses.

It was observed that opinions and observations of various scholars varied as it concerned the area of the study, hence a gap exist in the literature. This ignited the inquisition into the study. Objectives were raised that guided the study.

The methodology adopted was survey design, with the use of questionnaires. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. Four communities were sampled for the study among the benefiting ones. Household heads and community leaders constituted the sample for the study. The sample size was 80 respondents who data was collected from through the use of questionnaire, primarily while secondary data was collected from publications. The data collected were analyzed through the use of description and inferential statistical tools which included percentages, frequency tables and mean, while ordinary least square regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance was adopted to test the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics of the benefiting communities and the effects of the projects executed by the EU-MPP6.

CONCLUSION

After the analysis, results were observed to the extent that the projects that were executed in the benefiting communities by the EU-MPP6 impacted significantly on the livelihoods of the people in the area of study. The effects were evident in the building of school blocks, health centres, construction of feeder road and bridges. Further, it was observed that the participatory approach adopted by the EU-MPP6 facilitated the establishment and strengthening of cohesion in the communities, team spirit among the rural people, created employment and innovative and professional skills. Nonetheless, the projects suffered setbacks as noted in the lack of skills needed for the projects, difficulty in the provision of counterpart funding and non-co-operation in the benefiting communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, various strategies were recommended as stated below:

- 1) Intermediation between agencies and the rural communities should be encouraged.
- 2) Community and self-help spirit should be rekindled among members of the benefiting communities.
- 3) Poverty reduction agencies should be revisited and straightened to focus at tripartite participation.

- 4) Interventionists agencies should endeavor to provide adequate and sufficient fund for their projects.
- 5) The activities of the agency should be monitored by the government and civil society organizations to ensure transparency and efficiency in the discharge of their mandate.
- 6) Counterpart funding if necessary should be made to be affordable by providing in kind, due to abject poverty and vulnerability of the rural communities.
- 7) The rural dwellers should be train in needed techniques for the projects.
- 8.) The scope of the project should be widened to explore other sectors of the economy like agriculture electrification, commerce etc.

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