

ABSTRACT

REPORT OF THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN EMEKUKU COMMUNITY,
IMO STATE

New Nigeria Foundation undertook Sustainable Livelihood Assessments and needs assessments in Egbu and Emekuku communities. The assessments are useful in providing information on the livelihoods of the members of the communities, their strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats to improving livelihoods in the communities. The information generated is useful in developing and implementing development projects that can improve the livelihoods of members of the communities by building on their strengths and using the opportunities available to overcome the challenges and constraints inherent in the communities.

The study area, Imo State has a population of 2,485,499 persons (1991 census). The population density varies from 230 persons per square kilometre in Oguta/Egbema area, to about 1,400 persons per square kilometre in Mbaize, Orlu, Mbaitoli areas. The population density has led to intensified pressure on land, forests and other natural resources, leading to increasing rural poverty which is characteristic of densely populated rural areas. The climate of Imo State is typically humid (Ileoma and Arunsi, 1990) virtually every parcel of the land is settled, and one village merges imperceptibly into another. The economy of Imo State depends primarily on agriculture and commerce and the chief occupation of the people is farming. Their cash crops include oil palm, raffia palm, rice, groundnut, melon, cotton, cocoa, rubber, etc. Food crops such as yam, cassava, cocoyam and maize are also produced in large quantities. The location of Imo State within the tropical rainforest gives it the ecological basis for production of a wide range of tropical agricultural crops with extensive potentials for industrial usage.

The approach adopted in conducting the assessment involved the constitution of a multi-disciplinary team of consultants that undertook a participatory data collection process in the form of focus group discussions (FGDs). Key informant interviews (KIIs) were also employed to obtain more detailed information on issues that could not easily be obtained in groups. Field data was collected for two days using sustainable livelihood appraisal tools, which are useful in facilitating identification of problems, potentials and formulation of solutions by the community members themselves.

As a strategy for enhancing agricultural development, private investors are invited to participate in direct agricultural production, by investing in the planting and cultivation of agricultural crops such as maize, rice, legumes, roots and tubers. Forestry is yet to be fully developed in the state. Of the 490 potentially useful species, only about 100 are currently being utilized. Viable projects on which investors can invest in Imo State include, match splint and tooth pick manufacture, tissue paper production, etc. Investors can venture into the planting and cultivation of cashew, oil palm, citrus trees, etc.

In spite of the many constraints to the livelihoods of members of Emekuku community, several opportunities are available in the community. These include the following:

- I. The many educated but unemployed youths in the community constitute good quality manpower that can be transformed to agents of development in the community
- III. Land is available for animal husbandry and the members of the community see animal

husbandry as an area of development opportunity.

The community is willing to make land available for any developmental project.