

Fostering Rural Empowerment and Sustainable Development Solutions: Case Studies of Rural Communities in Nigeria and Senegal

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The sustainable Development Goal 2 seeks to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. In African rural communities, there are challenges of poverty, hunger, and inadequate access to basic services and infrastructure. Therefore, investment in empowerment geared to meeting social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development are germane to effective transformation of the rural economy in Africa. Rural livelihoods and empowerment can be enhanced through effective participation and decision making of rural people. Rural empowerment would assist rural communities in the management of their own social, economic and environmental/natural resources.

Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis approaches, this study elucidated the importance of rural empowerment taking into consideration the natural resources of the rural community, including occupation and entrepreneurship, wealth rankings, assessment of ecosystem services, gender analysis as well as the type and sources of technical/donor assistance needed to optimally utilize the ecological resources in their domains.

Our preliminary findings suggest that entrepreneurship is central to economic growth and development of the rural areas. Rural entrepreneurship enhanced access to healthcare, education, water and sanitation. Also, conversion of agricultural produce to monetary income underscored the importance of entrepreneurship to the rural people. However, the acceptance of entrepreneurship as a central development force by itself may not lead to sustainable rural development and the advancement of rural enterprises. What is needed in addition is empowerment of the rural entrepreneurs. It was observed that empowerment is central to promoting rural sustainable entrepreneurship.