

FARMERS' ORGANIZATION MAPPING

In Six States of Nigeria¹

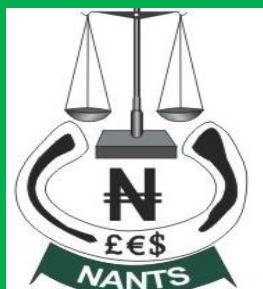


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¹ An IFAD-FGN Value Chain development project conducted by NANTS as Technical Partner under the supervision/management of Oxfam

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADP	Agricultural Development Programme
AFAN	Apex Farmers Association of Nigeria
ALFAN	All-Farmers Association of Nigeria
ASSAPIN	Association of Small Scale Agro Producers in Nigeria
CAC	Corporate Affairs Commission
CAMA	Companies and Allied Matters Act
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CCMS	Cooperative Credit and Marketing Societies
CDD	Community-Driven Development
CPMS	Cooperative Production and Marketing Societies
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FACAN	Federation of Agricultural Commodities Associations of Nigeria
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FO	Farmer's Organization
GFS	Group Farming Societies
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Africa
LGA	Local Government Area
NACO	Nigerian Agricultural Co-operative Organization
NAFAN	National Farmers' Association of Nigeria
NANTS	National Association of Nigerian Traders
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPFS	National Programmes for Food Security
OGB	Oxfam Great Britain
RIFAN	Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TGC	Tobacco Growers Cooperatives
USAID-MARKETS	United States Agency for International Development (...)
VCDP	Value Chain Development Programme
VFS	Voices for Food Security

Executive Summary

In implementing the IFAD-FGN Agricultural Value Chain Development Programme, an identified entry point is the organized farmers' groups in the six focal states. In order to establish the current baseline of the status, performance and maturity of these farmers groups, a mapping/study was conducted by an Oxfam-NANTS partnership commissioned by IFAD.

Interaction with the grassroots farmers' organizations was carried out through extensive interviews of the various groups organized around rice and cassava production, processing and marketing in the focal local governments of the six states. Data on various parameters of maturity, productivity and other activities along the value chains were obtained and various aspects of their operations were investigated in order to establish a baseline and determine the areas of possible interventions to strengthen the capacity of the groups to deliver value added services to their members which in turn, enhances the earnings of the small holder farmers within the value chains.

An inventory of farmers' cooperatives and groups in the six states was compiled from various sources and authenticated on the field by examining groups that are currently active in the commodity value chains (Rice and Cassava). Existing agricultural programmes in the states (government and development partners) were involved in determining the level of activities of the various mobilized farmer groups in the six states. The locations, contacts, membership strengths etc. are some attributes documented in the inventory.

Results from the analysis of data obtained from groups on the field show varying levels of maturity of groups in relation to various parameters considered including governance, operations, productivity and value addition. While majority score very high on governance related issues, some scored low on management related elements. Operationally, a good account was given of high frequency of meetings and the planning level was generally fair. However, the quality of the planning process and content was not investigated.

On interaction with apex agricultural groups, most groups had indicated that they do not belong to apex bodies which raised the question of how do the apex bodies mobilize members outside of the grassroots that most claim to represent. Several other attributes of the farmers groups were investigated including sources of funding, levels of income as well as types of assistance received in the past. The current levels of the operations of these groups with regard to these attributes are indicative of any developing country where capacity constraints are rife.

The study concludes with a SWOT analysis of the various groups on the basis of findings and recommendations on the possible types of intervention to build institutional capacity were made to IFAD. Some of the recommendations include capacity building based on specific needs assessment, incentivizing the participation of youth groups, encouraging the mobilization of women groups and the delivery of technical assistance through organized grassroots NGOs and CBOs for effective participation of the more relevant farmer groups in the focal value chains.

Farmers' Organization Mapping in Six States of Nigeria

A. Background

A Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) developed jointly by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in 2010-2011, was designed with the main objective of enhancing income and sustainable food security thereby contributing to the overall goal of rural poverty reduction and accelerated economic growth of small scale producers, processors and marketers focused on Rice and Cassava. The VCDP anticipates that the entry point for the programme will be organized groups of producers/processors, with attention to women/youth groups. In order to ensure outreach to these segments, the programme aimed to establish specific eligibility criteria to select groups and organizations which include among others, the size of the land of group members (not exceeding 5 hectares of land under rice/cassava) and the processing capacity of small-scale processors (an average of 2 tons/day for cassava and 4 tons/day for rice). Good governance, social inclusion, and participation are also considered as criteria for selecting participating organizations in the programme.

Given the emphasis on producers' groups, a study mapping for identification of Farmers' Organizations (FOs), their strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities for their development serve as a building block of the design process and will help the design team to finalize the design of the project on the basis of the study findings.

In October, 2012, IFAD commissioned a study mapping with Oxfam GB (OGB) as the lead partner and the National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS) as technical partner with the main goal of understanding the farmers' movement in the 6 States of IFAD's proposed intervention. The mapping is envisaged to provide an overview of the type and maturity of existing farmers organizations in cassava and rice value chains, the services provided to their members, the strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats for their development as effective, membership-driven FOs capable of providing services to their members. The mapping was envisaged to entail field visits to the 6 states and working in partnership with LGAs and State Governments.

B. The Process

An inception meeting which was attended by representatives of various agencies and organizations who were considered pertinent to the successful delivery of the planned study

(Annex 1 gives the details of attendees and their institutions) served as the take-off for the study.

At the meeting, an overall introduction of the main subject was given by NANTS Secretariat President with brief remarks on the purpose of the study while the IFAD-OGB-NANTS framework for managing the study was also explained to participants. The technical components of the study in terms of design and methodology were presented by NANTS as stipulated in the original concept note and final contractual documents. This then opened the discussions on various aspects of the study including methodology, the relevance and application of the study to the value chain development programme as well as sourcing and authenticating of data for the purpose of conducting detailed analysis on the roles of FOs in the rice and cassava value chain within the six states of IFAD's focus.

Some of the conclusions reached include;

1. Study should commence with a background research of the trend and current state of play of independent self-organized farmers organization in Nigeria with particular reference to the six IFAD states,
2. Farmers' organization should include ALL agro related self-organized groups because of their varying roles in the value chain approach to IFAD's work,
3. There will be two levels of data mining from the states to have an understanding of the current state of play of FOs and their structure in the states,
4. The first level will generate an inventory of ALL FOs including basic data for identification and purpose of establishment,
5. The second level data will step down to the specific priority local government areas indicated in the VCDP design (3 LGs per state – 18 LGs in total),
6. The organizations will be assessed through a SWOT analysis and form the basis for designing a support strategy which should focus on FOs related to the two value chains of IFAD's interest – rice and cassava.

With these conclusions, discussions with key Agencies and Organizations at the national level commenced as representatives at the inception meeting have been asked to open their doors.

The conclusions from the inception meeting however benefited from considering the content of an earlier study carried out by IFAD in 2011 which conducted a mapping and assessment of the various value chain related institutions in four states out of the six states of IFAD's interest. The study had mapped and analyzed the current state of play and extensively discussed the roles of the various institutions related to the two value chains in four states. Therefore, in another coordination meeting with IFAD country team of Atsuko Toda (IFAD Country Programme

Manager) and Dr. Ben Odoemena (IFAD Country Programme Officer), it was observed that a study that will aim at covering the entire agricultural related FOs in the six states may be too broad and generate too much data that may not be utilized for the purpose of the value chain development programme especially considering the time limit of the study which should be concluded by December 31, 2012. As such, it was concluded that focus should be on compiling data of FOs related to the two value chains while focusing on identifying and conducting organizational assessments for the institutions that exist in the focal Local Government Areas (LGAs) for all the six states. This would entail documenting identified FOs in all the focal Local Governments and examining their current locational, organizational and socio-economic attributes that will enable practical leverage of their potentials in delivering the VCDP as well as their capacity constraints for the purpose of developing an institutional strengthening strategy. This became the understanding of the team and forms the current approach to conducting an IFAD VCDP specific mapping.

C. Geographic Coverage

In terms of geographic coverage, the six states of IFAD's proposed value chain programme were covered in the study. In the six states, three (3) LGAs which had been prioritized by earlier analysis of aggregate levels of production were selected. It must be noted that prior to the commencement of this study, only four states had been engaged in the VCDP design. However, two new states (Niger and Ogun) were included in the VCDP. The priority LGAs in these two new states were selected on the basis of the aggregate level of production of the two commodities of interest. The ADP management of the two new states determined the priority LGAs on the basis of data available in the ADP. For the purpose of this study, the States and the LGAs covered are shown in the table below as follows:

Table 1: List of states and Priority Local Government Areas

S/N	States	Local Government Area Covered
1.	Anambra	a. Anyamelum LGA b. Anambra East LGA c. Anambra West LGA
2.	Benue	a. Agatu LGA b. Guma LGA c. Vandeikya LGA
3.	Ebonyi	a. Ikwo LGA b. Abakaliki LGA c. Ohaukwu LGA
4.	Niger	a. Katcha LGA b. Mokwa LGA

		c. Wushishi LGA
5.	Ogun	a. Egbado south LGA b. Ijebu North LGA c. Obafemi-Owode LGA
6.	Taraba	a. Gassol LGA b. Ardo-Kola LGA c. Wukari LGA

See Study Area Maps below:

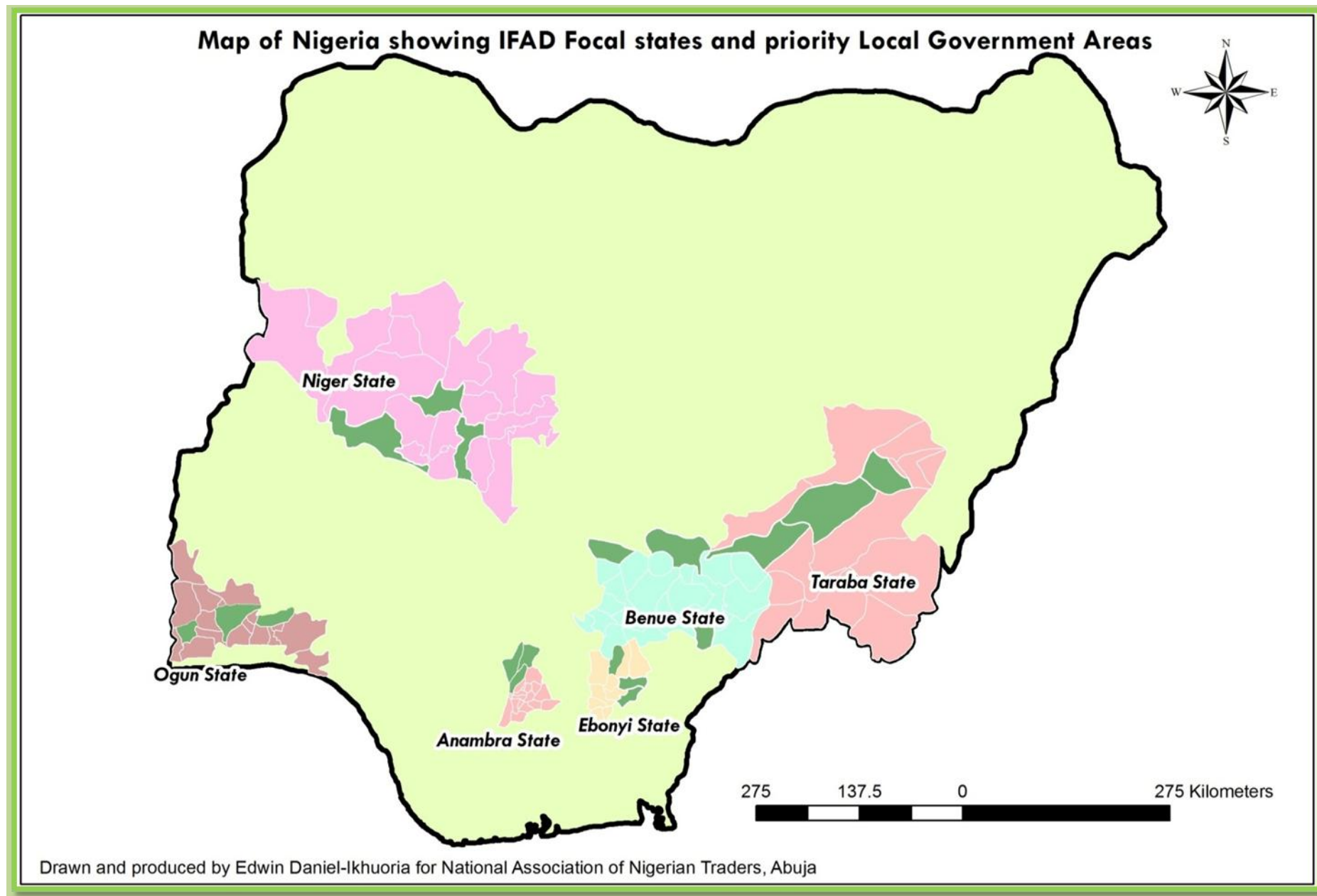


Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing States and Local Government covered by VCDP

D. Data Collection and Scope:

The scope of FO data collection was limited to FOs as they exist in the focal LGAs and whose activities relate to the value chains. Identification of the related FOs was done in close collaboration with state agencies responsible for registering and monitoring groups' formation (cooperatives and associations) while the Agricultural Development authorities of the states and their local government level networking frameworks particularly using the extension delivery mechanisms were engaged in identifying active groups at the local community levels.

In order to get a comprehensive and inclusive list, various programmes and institutions currently operating in the states were approached to get their list of groups who were mobilized for the delivery of their programmes. These programmes include FADAMA, National Programme for Food Security (NPFS), USAID MARKETS and Department of Cooperatives of FMARD. These institutions and programmes obliged the study with their specific lists of groups in the local governments of interest and these were cross referenced to determine which groups are working on Rice and Cassava value chains with minimal exclusions based on knowledge of existing groups. The enumerators were mandated to include groups on the field who were not included in the inventory but are actively engaged in activities within the value chain.

Survey instruments were designed to elicit information on the socio-economic status of the various categories of FOs as well as their roles and capacity in the value chains. The questionnaires were divided into sections. The first section which was compulsory for all types of FOs listed covered the basic locational, socio-economic as well as organization characteristics of the FOs while the other sections are structured to elicit information on the particular activities of the FOs within the value chain depending on the functioning of the groups as producers, processors or marketing. The other sets of questions are designed for groups that were not specifically organized along a particular cooperative activity within the value chain but identified to be playing roles on cross-cutting issues that relate to the development the value chains. Specifically, the optional sections covered:

1. Producer cooperatives
2. Processing cooperatives
3. Marketing or trading cooperatives
4. Other civil associations related to the value chain that are not cooperatives (e.g. Associations, NGOs, CBOs, Networks etc.) for SWOT analysis.

From data collected from the field, key indicators relating to the development and growth of FOs at the grassroots that were analyzed include the spatial distribution, number and socio-economic characteristics of groups based on the total number enumerated.

Developing a system wide support strategy based on empirical data collected and analyzed with a strong indication of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the aggregated groups forms an integral deliverable of this study.

E. Limitations of study

While the mapping study was set to appraise the status of Farmer groups in the six states of the VCDP, a rigorous exercise detailing intrinsic aspects of organizational and group dynamics would have taken a lot more time to accomplish. However, with reference to time limits and resources, enumeration of groups on the field could only be done at levels that are practical within the scope of assignment. As such, some details like size of land cultivated, capacity of processing facilities etc., provided by respondents could not be verified.

Another limitation of this study stems from a general lack of understanding of spatial and volumetric measurements. This is particularly significant as the VCDP envisages that groups that fall within a certain level of agricultural productivity are to be considered in the value chain interventions. So, when groups respond to the size of land they currently farm, the information provided cannot be said to be accurate as there was no time to visit cultivated fields.

Also, lists of mobilized groups provided by the various institutions approached to compile a comprehensive list of groups for the two value chains cannot be said to be exhaustive. As such, enumerators were depended upon to work with groups found on the field to authenticate a comprehensive list. The extent to which this can be relied upon is also a limitation of this study.

PART 1:

1.0. Trends in Farmers' Organization in Nigeria

Group formation of interest groups in Nigeria dates back to the colonial periods when individuals on the basis of various struggles aggregate efforts at maximizing the potentials that come from numbers. The history and importance of agricultural cooperative organizations in Nigeria is a long-standing one. Ihimodu (1998) traced their origin to British administration in 1935 with the enactment of the cooperative society law. Moreover, before the legislative control there had been indigenous attempts to form associations such as cocoa farmers' society and kola-nut planters union. These associations were formed in major cocoa producing areas and they were independent of government support (Ihimodu, 1998: 50). Cooperative organizations have undergone changes over the years ranging from traditional, informal to modern and formal institutions (Harris and Stefanson, 2005).

These voluntary social organizations are found in communities possessing common interests but differ in size and degree of interaction among members (Thompson, 2002). In these societies, members have had the ability to influence ideas and actions of the government through a common bargaining power. In this regard, most community and agricultural development agencies have sought the support of these organizations as effective means of imparting new ideas, techniques, harnessing their resources towards improving agricultural production and this constitutes the significance of farmers' cooperative organizations towards the development of agricultural sector.

Nigeria has over the years embarked on many agricultural development strategies such as input subsidization, marketing boards, and institutional reforms geared towards improvement of agricultural production. The failure of many agricultural development programmes in Nigeria could be traced to poor organizational structure and implementation at the grassroots level (Omotosho, 2007: 57). The rural poor farmers are isolated, under-educated and lack the means to win greater access to means of production such as capital, labour and this engendered pulling together financial resources towards a common goal. Donald (2002) remarked that some projects targeted ranged from medium to large-scale producers and supporting them with technology, credit and extension services hoping that improvements will gradually extend to the more backward and disadvantaged rural areas, but unfortunately none of such projects brought about increases in the yield of crops for participants and non-participants. Indeed, a good number of factors are responsible for this, such as constantly changing technology

through education and research, availability of equipment and supplies including the ability of farmers to obtain them on time, poor transportation network, among others (Adefila, 2011)².

It is the gap arising from the inadequacies of government and other institutions that led to the formation of farmers' organizations as means of achieving goals of common interests (Odigbo, 1998: 213). These agricultural cooperative societies do engage in the production, processing, marketing and distribution of agricultural products. An important form of agricultural cooperative in Nigeria is the Group Farming Societies (GFS). Members of this society engage in the production of a variety of crops while they also arrange for the marketing of the products. Some other agricultural cooperatives are devoted to the cultivation of single crops and such societies are named after the crops such as Tobacco Growers Cooperatives (TGC), Cooperative Credit and Marketing Societies (CCMS). In addition, there are Cooperative Production and Marketing Societies (CPMS) in marketing crops such as cocoa, groundnuts and palm produces. Moreover, there are modern agricultural processing cooperatives for crops such as oil seeds and groundnuts (Ihimodu, 1998: 50; 2007: 36). Farmers' cooperatives have played far reaching roles in agricultural development.

In today's Nigeria, while the growth of agricultural cooperatives may not have reached the expected potential in terms of effectively influencing the development of agriculture in favour of the practicing members, new trends have emerged in the mode of formation of groups that are based not solely economic interests but on social as well as trade union activities. This trend has seen the evolution of various groups organized as umbrella bodies at national, state and local government levels. The services rendered vary from economic services, financial services, political and policy advocacy services to outright trade unionism. On the basis of these, it would be proper to consider the legal framework for group formation in Nigeria.

1.1. Legal framework

Statutory law governs the creation of not-for-profit Organizations, associations, cooperatives, charitable trusts, trade unions and comparable Organizations in Nigeria. For most of the identified farmers' Organizations, their legal statuses are pretty straight forward. Groups intending to register as not-for-profits are incorporated through the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) as Incorporated Trustees, Limited by Guarantee (LTD/GTE) or other applicable status. But for cooperatives, they are registered at the state level at the Department of Cooperatives with minimum membership requirements and equity. They are all incorporated

² Adefila JO (2011): An assessment of cooperatives as a rural economic development strategy in Nigeria. Paper presented at the International conference of the research and development institute (IRDI), held at Ambrose Ali University - Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria. 4-6 May.

as limited liability entities. The cooperatives, though not registered for profit purposes, are allowed to declare surpluses which form the dividends for members if their activities result in such surplus. The Department of Cooperatives usually has the Area Officers who monitor and facilitate the registration of Cooperative groups at the Local Government levels. The effective functioning of these local officers varies from state to state and from local government to local government, depending on the level of funding and economic activities.

Trade unions, Associations and charities have to meet certain obligations by law to enable them receive a Certificate of incorporation before they can legally operate as a body in Nigeria irrespective of their focus, whether agriculture or not. The terms of their registration are specified in the related Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA). These groups are usually asked to submit a Constitution or Memorandum of Association as well as documentary evidence of complying with other legal obligations, the basis for which legal searches are made by the body responsible and approval granted. For associations that intend to include “national” into their nomenclature, the approval of the Attorney-General’s office is also mandatorily required.

1.2. Apex Farmers’ Networks operating in IFAD VCDP States

1.2.1. General purpose Organizations

(a) Apex farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN)

AFAN plays an important role in the agricultural circle in Nigeria and seems to have close relations with the Government. The organization was borne out of the merger of two umbrella organizations- the All-Farmers Association of Nigeria (ALFAN) and the National Farmers’ Association of Nigeria (NAFAN). This merger was purportedly recommended by the former Nigerian President- Olusegun Obasanjo, who wanted to see all Nigerian producers assembled in one organization, so that the government would have a single clearly identified interlocutor for addressing agricultural issues with the farming community. There are also indications that AFAN is a broad umbrella Organization with commodity-based Organization as members, for which it provides lobby and advocacy services.

The composition of its leadership has very often been affected by changes in the government and some politicians who are mainly notable large scale commercial farmers. However, it must be noted that, there are uncertainties in the leadership structure of the organization. The details of the current leadership structure of AFAN were not available to this study as divisions and politically sensitive issues relating to elections and legitimacy abound.

In terms of membership, AFAN registers individual members as well as groups. The national outlook of its membership provides a national coverage but most members are actually members of smaller state or local level groups which are networked into the national body. AFAN seems to play an important role in Nigerian agriculture, and draws its legitimacy from its membership inherited from ALFAN and NAFAN. AFAN's presence in the states of IFAD intervention has been in association with commodity associations like Nigeria cassava growers Association, Rice farmers Association and other groups. But no state office of AFAN was noticed in any of the six states of IFAD focus.

In terms of focus, AFAN's activity is essentially that of an advocacy group at the federal government level. It has often been reproached for not representing small farmers in Nigeria, which form the largest part of farming activities in the country. AFAN also participates in broad policy undertaking of the federal government of Nigeria while also (economically) taking part in various programmes of inputs mobilization, distribution and information dissemination.

(b) Association of Small Scale Agro Producers in Nigeria (ASSAPIN):

The Voices for Food Security (VFS) campaign was launched in July 2009 by Nigerian organizations working with international NGOs, most notably Oxfam. These include Nigerian smallholder farmers, civil society organizations and various Nigerian networks. The main objective is to mobilize actors and support their efforts to work together on food security issues in Nigeria. The participation of many organizations representing Nigerian smallholders in this campaign led to the creation of the Association of Small Scale Agro-Producers in Nigeria (ASSAPIN) with the mission of representing small producers at the national level. ASSAPIN obtained official recognition in March 2010. ASSAPIN represents local FOs that are present in all thirty-six states. ASSAPIN aims to affiliate 100,000 members, and has taken on the mission of defending food sovereignty and smallholder agriculture in Nigeria.

While ASSAPIN's work is still closely tied to the VFS campaign and advocacy, it also pursues action to support farm production, via projects to give farmers access to inputs. The Association also supports agricultural trade by helping farmers gain access to markets and developing their negotiating skills. ASSAPIN's leadership is primarily by election with a Board of Trustees providing oversight functions. It maintains a functional secretariat in Abuja. As at the time of this study, no office belonging to ASSAPIN was seen in any of the IFAD states even when their membership list indicates the presence of some group affiliates in some states. ASSAPIN's membership is growing as mobilization of cooperative groups across the federation is currently being undertaken.

1.2.2. Commodity and Cooperatives Federations

(a) Federation of Agricultural Commodities Associations of Nigeria (FACAN):

FACAN like AFAN is also a national network consisting of commodity associations with its headquarters in Abuja. FACAN (unlike AFAN) works along commodity value chains and not specific to producers/farmers only. It was inaugurated in 2011 by the Federal Ministry of Commerce and Industry with the purpose of promoting commodity exports and value addition. As such, many of the commodity groups that exist across the country which are within the AFAN network also form part of the federating units of FACAN. It is interesting to note that in some target states, like Ogun and Benue the FACAN coordinators are also AFAN coordinators. Like AFAN too, state offices of FACAN are offices of federating commodity groups predominant in the state of reference.

The focus of FACAN is mainly the coordination of commodity associations that mainly work at promoting value addition and exports for the specific commodity they focus on at the federal level. Their advocacy work cuts across producing and processing activities and involves organization of exhibitions and promotion of investments in the various value chains depending on the commodity of focus.

Some commodity based associations currently within the FACAN network include:

1. Nigeria Cassava Growers Association (NCGA)
2. Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN)
3. Cocoa Association of Nigeria (CAN)
4. National Sesame Seed Association of Nigeria (NSSAN)
5. National Soya-bean Association of Nigeria
6. National Ginger Association of Nigeria
7. Potato growers, processors and Marketers Association of Nigeria (POGPMAN)
8. Artisan Fishermen Association of Nigeria (ARFAN)
9. National Cotton Association of Nigeria (NACOTAN)
10. National Coffee and Tea Association of Nigeria (NACOFTAN)
11. National Shea Products Association of Nigeria (NSPAN)
12. National Palm Produce Association of Nigeria (NPPAN)
13. National Cashew Association of Nigeria (NCAN)
14. Federation of bee keepers association of Nigeria (FEBKAN)
15. National Association of Gum-Arabic Processors and Marketers Association of Nigeria (NAGAPPEN)
16. National Rubber Association of Nigeria (NRAN)

17. Cattle Breeders and Dealers Association of Nigeria (CBDAN)
18. Sheep and Goats Farmers Association of Nigeria
19. Jatropha Productivity Stakeholders Association of Nigeria
20. National Banana/Plantain Association of Nigeria
21. Poultry Association of Nigeria (PAN)
22. Organic Agriculture Foundation of Nigeria
23. Castor Growers, processors and Marketers of Nigeria (CASGPMAN)
24. Groundnut Farmers Association of Nigeria (GROFAN)
25. Wheat Farmers Association of Nigeria
26. Rubber farmers association of Nigeria
27. Kolanut/Bitter Kola producers and marketers Association of Nigeria
28. Tomatoes and Vegetables Producers and Marketers Association of Nigeria
29. Yam growers Association of Nigeria
30. Mushroom Producers Association of Nigeria
31. Onions Producers and Marketers Association of Nigeria
32. National Association of Sorghum Farmers of Nigeria
33. Hides and Skin Association of Nigeria
34. National Union of Fishermen and Dealers Association of Nigeria
35. Association of Fish farmers and Aqua-culturists of Nigeria
36. Millet farmers Association of Nigeria
37. Catfish Association of Nigeria
38. Organic Agriculture
39. Processors Association of Nigerian
40. Sorghum Association
41. Maize Growers Association

It can be seen from the list that all the commodity associations are national in outlook with membership across producing states for the commodities they represent or promote. Since most of the commodities represented are not within the IFAD value chain focus, no attempt at studying their configuration and internal workings was made. However, for the Rice and Cassava Associations, their level of integration of groups at the local level was explored by enumerating local cooperatives groups to find out if any affiliation exists between them and these national networks.

The leadership of FACAN is structured on elective positions with an Executive Secretary who heads the Secretariat. The Secretariat is located within the Federal Ministry of Trade and Investments, indicative of a close working relationship. FACAN through its Deputy Executive Secretary, Prince Bakare had stated that the major strength of FACAN is its transparent

leadership structure and representation that cuts across all segments of the commodity value chains in the country.

(b) The Nigerian Agricultural Co-operative Organization (NACO)

The formation of NACO was facilitated by the Federal government of Nigeria only recently when the former Cooperative Federation of Nigeria was not as functional as expected. The membership cuts across the country with its secretariat currently based in Kogi state. NACO stimulates initiatives at the federal level for accessing incentives on behalf of members especially inputs. Through cooperative systems and networks, it supplies agricultural inputs to farmers but its level of maturity is not certain as it is only a recent creation.

Its leadership according to the Department of Cooperatives in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture is by election with a congress formed by delegates of federating cooperatives from across the country. No detail of its operations is available to understand its major strength(s) as the Secretariat is not within the IFAD states of focus.

(c) National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS)

An organization driven by linking producers with domestic and international markets, NANTS is a membership based organization formed in 1997 to give a platform to producers as well as marketers of domestic and imported tradable items with an essential view towards interfacing with the policy and operational space for non-formal (informal) sector. Since agriculture in Nigeria is largely in the informal sector, NANTS' membership covers a wide range of domestic producers and farmers' networks. NANTS is also one of the founding member organizations in the Voices for Food Security campaign that eventually gave birth to ASSAPIN. NANTS has over 152 market associations and producer groups cut across Nigeria (with about 38 just recently launched in the FCT - Abuja).

Within the six states for the VCDP intervention, NANTS has a full-fledged office and ground staff in Benue state from where it oversees the activities of members of its network which are made up of federating cooperative groups within the Middle-belt Small scale Farmers Network (MIBSSFANET). Similarly, NANTS also has members in Ebonyi, Ogun, Taraba and Niger State and these State Chapters encompass both producers (small scale farmers) as well as marketers of rice and cassava among other key commodities. It is also noteworthy that NANTS has offices in many other States of the federation outside the VCDP intervention States, and these presence draws strong interlink between production and market access for agricultural commodities. The strength of NANTS majorly lies in research, policy advocacy and intervention services directly

targeted at her small scale farmer members. NANTS also draws from a strong working relationship with the regional peasant farmers network (ROPPA), as well as the Pan African NGO Consortium on Agriculture (PANGOC, set up by the Forum for Agriculture Research in Africa- FARA) which has its Secretariat in NANTS.

PART 2:

2.0. Socio-Economic Assessment of Grassroots Farmers' Organizations in Nigeria

2.1. Introduction:

Local group formation in Nigeria has a very long history as highlighted in the background section of this report. In fine-tuning the design process of the IFAD value chain programme, an institutional mapping and assessment was conducted in 2011³ that gave a qualitative assessment of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities of various institutions across four (4) states that IFAD will focus its interventions. The institutional assessment included both public and private institutions and groups that are significant in the entire states. There was however, a need to determine the location and socio-economic characteristics of the specific groups in the local governments of interest since IFAD will only be working in three (3) priority local governments in each state. This study thus provides an analysis of the characteristics of these groups to determine various aspects of their maturity including institutional strengths and weaknesses. It also enables the determination of the baseline for various aspects of their activities within the two commodities value chain for interventions.

Understanding the socio-economic characteristics of grassroots farmers' organization that pertain to IFAD/FGN's value chain development programme requires extensive data collection on the individual groups as presented by the authorities of the states and local governments responsible for oversight functions of the existing groups. In order to get an inventory of the existing groups, various lists of the groups that are functioning within the two commodity value chains were derived from institutions working with the groups where they are available.

For all the states, lists were obtained from the following:

1. States' Department of Cooperatives
2. State Agricultural Development Programmes
3. National Programme for Food Security
4. Federal Government/World Bank FADAMA III programmes in the states
5. USAID MARKETS (in states where they are working)

These lists were synthesized and based on local knowledge of the operations of the groups within the value chains, a comprehensive list was developed and enumerators were deployed

³ Institutional Assessment of IFAD VCDP was carried out by Profs. Yayock and Lombin in July 2011

to the field to collect data on these groups. These data collected were subjected to tests of consistency and cleaned-up to retain only data on groups which show consistency across the variables considered. The retained data were further verified by off-site random phone calls to interviewed leaders of the groups to corroborate data collected on their groups. The integrity level of data collected was then established.

Based on the variables under consideration, the total number of interviewed groups were aggregated and analyzed to determine patterns for existing groups. The characteristics thus established were used to understand their strengths and weaknesses and thus develop an intervention strategy for their proper functioning.

2.2. Groups Inventory in the 18 Local Governments:

After extensive field data collection, a compilation of groups related to the rice and cassava value chains was developed for the 3 priority LGAs in the six states. Annex 1-6 provides a comprehensive inventory of the groups enumerated between November 6 and December 10, 2012. A summary of the groups compiled is shown in the table 2 below.

From the table it can be seen that overall, there are more groups within the Cassava value chain while the number of groups in the rice value chain closely follows it. About 205 of the groups enumerated overall are involved in the production of both commodities. Concerning focus on activities in the 2 value - chains, most groups are found in production activities as expected. The number of processing groups in both commodities does not however give a true picture of the level of processing activities in the value chains as many individual enterprises exist that are involved in processing activities but who were not captured because the study mapping is focused only on groups.

From the charts below, it is obvious that the number of cassava producing groups is driven by the Ogun and Anambra states with a total of 154 and 121 groups respectively. The two states account for over 50% of the total number of cassava producing groups enumerated. Rice producers are driven by Niger, Anambra and Benue states with 113, 105 and 102 groups respectively. However, for groups producing both crops, Taraba state has more than 50% share of the total number of groups enumerated.

Deductions of a general nature concerning groups at the grassroots were made from detailed findings for the 18 local governments across the six states attached in Annexes 1-6. The state data analysis provides details of the findings at the state level while drawing conclusions that are used for developing a system wide intervention strategy using groups as entry points.

Table 2: Summary of Rice and Cassava groups in the study States/LGAs

State & LGAs		Cassava			Rice			Rice and cassava			summary
States	L.G.As	Prod. Groups	Proc. groups	Mktg. groups	Prod. Groups	Proc. groups	Mktg. groups	Prod. groups	Proc. groups	Mktg. groups	Totals
Niger	Katcha	10	4	-	33	9	-	5	-	-	61
	Mokwa	44	1	1	36	2		6	-	-	90
	Wushishi	4	8	-	44			10	-	-	66
	State Total	58	13	1	113	11	-	21	-	-	217
Ogun	Obafemi-Owode	63	3	-	17	-	-	3	-	-	86
	Egbado south	34	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	40
	Ijebu North	57	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	64
	State Total	154	8	-	25	-	-	3	-	-	190
Anambra	Ayamelu m	1	-	-	83	1		-	18	-	103
	Anambra East	83	-		9	3	-	5	-	-	100
	Anambra West	37	1	-	13	-	-	51	-	-	102
	State Total	121	1	-	105	4	-	56	18	-	305
Ebonyi	Ohaukwu	25	-	-	1	-	-	4	-	-	30
	Abakaliki	26	-	-	33	1	-	5	-	-	65
	Ikwo	2	-	-	36		-	5	-	-	43
	State Total	53	-	-	70	1	-	14	-	-	138
Benue	Agatu	15	4	-	42	6	-	6	-	5	78
	Guma	17	2	-	40	2	-	1	-		62
	Vandeikya	33	7	1	20	4	-	-	-	2	67
	State Total	65	13	1	102	12	-	7	-	7	207
Taraba	Ardo-kola	14	-	-	12	1	-	11	-	-	38
	Gassol	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	-	-	50
	Wukari	58	-	-	33	4	-	57	1	-	153
	State Total	72	-	-	45	5	-	118	1	-	241
Totals		523	35	2	460	33	0	219	19	7	1298

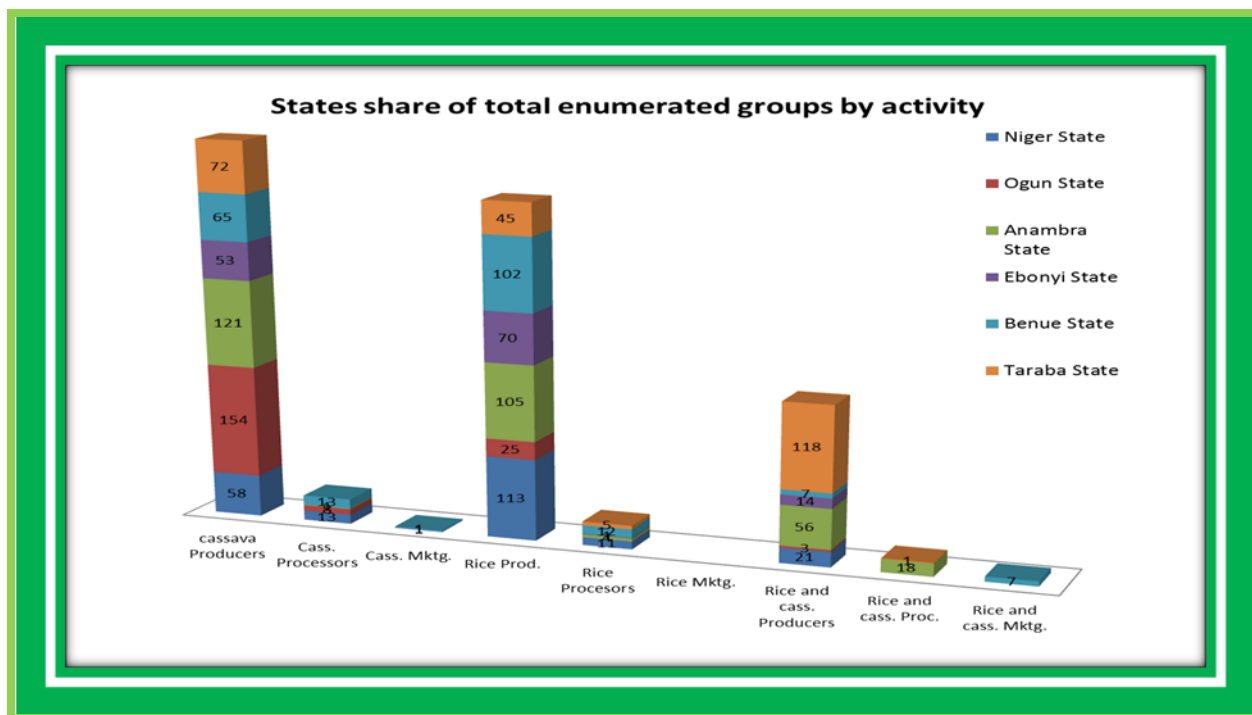


Figure 2: States Share of enumerated groups by activity

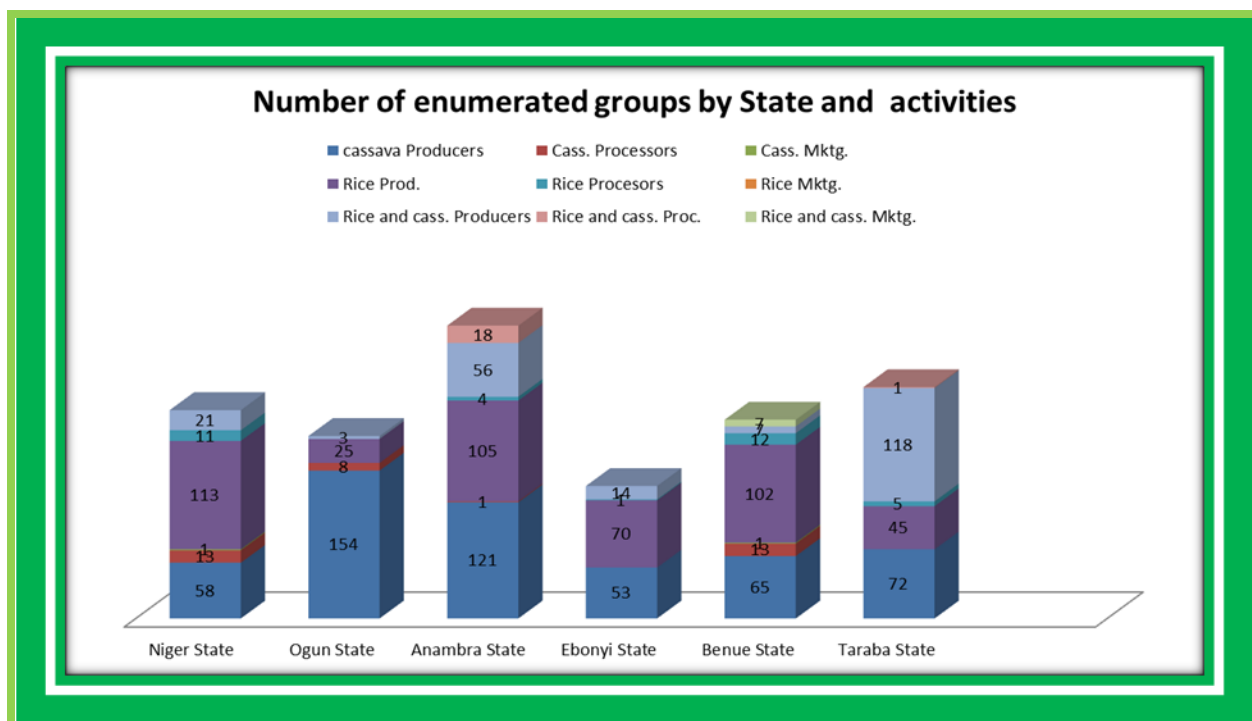


Figure 3: Number of Enumerated groups by State and Activities

PART 3

3.0. Data Analysis of Farmers' Organizations in Six States of Nigeria

3.1. Summary of Findings for Groups Across the Six States

3.1.1. Length of Operations

In the six states, more than three quarters of the groups enumerated have operated for less than 10 years (78%). When viewed against the background of ongoing agricultural intervention programmes, it can be deduced that most group's mobilization may have been facilitated through ongoing and past programmes of Agricultural interventions.

3.1.2. Enrolment Size

More than half of the groups have enrolment size of less than 25 people (63%) while a cumulative of 37% have enrolment size of more than 25 people.

3.1.3. Gender Composition

Homogenous groups of either females or males only are not as widespread as mixed groups. Only 8% of the groups enumerated in the six states are "Females only" groups while 9% are "Males only" groups. But the majority of groups are mixed groups (83%). 92% of the groups interviewed have females in their leadership at the aggregate level of the six states

3.1.4. Age and experience of group members

Agriculture is engaged in more by the middle age category of between 30 and 50 years. Only a minimum number of homogenous youth groups are still actively involved in the value chains while the majority of the homogenous population is in the middle age category that depends heavily on agriculture to meet their personal and family needs.

More than half (55%) of the groups have members who have been in the business for 10 years or less. This is significant in that if this is compared with the age of the members, the majority of the members are between 30 and 50 years old.

3.1.5. Types of Services rendered by Farmer groups

71% of groups focused on ensuring unity and peace within the groups or dispute settlement while introducing new ideas and techniques of farming comes next (69%) in the frequency of responses to services rendered. Granting credit facilities to members (68%) closely follows introduction of new ideas.

Other groups also stated that they were providing services related to enlightenment and educating members (Seminars, Workshops and demonstrations) (65%), rendering guidance and counseling services (61%) and Fundraising for agricultural activities (50%). Creating a platform for marketing agricultural products (44%) and Subsidizing agricultural inputs to members/Group bargaining (41%) were also highlighted as key components of the services rendered by groups across the six states.

3.1.6. Governance, management and operational structure of groups

Most groups (81%) across the six states have elected executive as their organ of management. A significant 14% of groups have permanent leadership with no elections. While there is a significant number of groups that are governed by elected officials, some groups (5%) also engage permanent staff to run the cooperative organizations.

Operationally, it was observed that most groups across the six states have meetings at least once a month (77%) with a further 12% of groups meeting at least once a week. Of these groups, 60% claim that the meetings are held regularly while 40% of the groups admit to the irregularity of their meetings. But of the claims for frequency and regularity of meetings, only 57% of them were verified by sighting minutes' book of meetings.

In terms of the level of planning engaged in by the groups, 921 groups (76%) claim to plan and implement their plans. 74% of the groups who claim to plan showed evidence of documented plans while 26% could not show evidence of documented plans. It was also noted however, that 13% and 9% respectively plan but do not implement and wants to plan but do not know how.

Only 78 out of 1,255 groups enumerated had employees working for them. This constitutes only 6% of the whole. The rest 94% do not have their own employees. So business is strictly run by members. The highest number is 15 staff for an individual group in Katcha LGA in Niger state while the lowest is 1 staff.

3.1.7. Funding of Groups

Levies and dues constitute the major source of funding for the groups followed by fund raising programmes while Credit facilities from the cooperatives are also a significant source of revenue and funding for the groups. This is closely followed by donor or government grants. Internally generated revenue including sources like levies and dues from members as well as credit from cooperatives constitutes the primary source of funds for more than 80% of the groups. Loan from financial institutions also forms a significant source of fund for about 11% of the groups.

3.1.8. Level of income

A majority of the groups (40%) are earning above N160, 000.00 from cooperative activities per annum while 60% of the entire group earn less than N160, 000.00 for their activities from all the sources of income highlighted. 12% of the groups interviewed actually earn less than N40, 000.00 per annum for cooperative activities.

3.1.9. Financial Record Keeping

While 1,220 groups claim to keep records, only 742 of the groups (about 61%) actually showed records for verification.

3.1.10. Enterprise Record keeping

Of the total number of groups (1,248) interviewed across the six states, 937 claimed that their members were keeping records of their activities in their individual businesses. 311 or about 25% of the respondents across the six states stated that they do not keep records. 893 out of 937 groups are keeping records of their expenses. Records of income (882), Sales (834), profit (831), harvest (701) are kept by the groups in that order. Also records of inputs used in farming (562) and very few (4) other kinds which were not specified were specifically mentioned.

3.1.11. External Relationships among Groups

Membership of other networks: 371 of the 1,178 groups (31%) interviewed had membership with other networks. The vast majority seem to work in isolation. 69% of the aggregated groups across the six states stated that they do not belong to any network

Collaboration with other groups: 219 groups out of 1,229 stated that they have had collaborations with other groups. This is just about 18% of the total groups enumerated.

External Assistance or Interventions: Majority (68%) of the groups stated that they have not had any assistance or interventions from external sources, whether government or development partners.

Results of external Assistance or interventions: For groups which admitted to receiving assistance from external bodies (32%), the most change occurred in improvement in farming practices. Increased production/processing/marketing, improved management practice and increased access to improved variety of inputs or machinery were also stated as changes that result from interventions in that ranking order. The lowest response was received on increased access to credit/funds.

Groups' involvement in advocacy: The subject of advocacy is not a major undertaking by groups. Only 194 out of 1,172 groups (about 17%) claimed to have influenced some level of government action or policy for their benefit.

3.1.12. Productivity of groups

Land Holding: Land holding by group members shows that while 116 groups have members with less than 1 hectare, 660 groups have members with land holding of between 1ha and 5ha. But a whopping 387 groups fall outside the VCDP range of 5ha.

Cassava Production: For cassava, 60% reported to have produced less than 50tons in the last farming season. 21% of the groups' responses indicated that their total production was between 50 and 100 tons while 19% produced above 100 tons of cassava.

Rice Production: For rice, most groups (40%) are producing less than 10 tons in the last season while 35% produced between 10 and 30 tons. A significant 25% produced above 30 tonnes in the last season.

Processing and value addition by groups: On processing of commodities before sales, a major proportion of the groups interviewed still process less than 20% of their total production. About 22% of the groups are processing between 20% and 50% of their products before sale.

3.1.13. Income generation in the value chains

On income from activities in the value chain, while the majority of respondents (54%) earn between N100,000.00 and N500,000.00 per annum, a significant proportion earn above N500,000.00 per annum from activities in the value chain. Only 18% of the total number of groups earn less than N100, 000.00 per annum from their enterprises in the value chains.

3.1.14. Processing and marketing groups

For processing groups, only a total of 84 groups out of 1,298 (about 6%) were found to be organized around processing activities across the six states. Their processing capacity could not be ascertained due to answers from the groups which was detailing the 'horse power' capacity of their machines instead of quantities of commodities processed.

With regard to ownership of storage facilities by processing groups, most of the groups interviewed affirmed that they had storage facilities but the capacity of the storage facilities could also not be ascertained as measurements given by the respondents could not be correlated with actual quantities of commodities stored.

All the groups organized around processing claimed that they have not expanded their facilities and that funds for such expansion is not available.

Concerning groups organized around marketing activities, only a few groups (9 groups out of 1,298) are mobilized strictly around marketing of commodities and their derivatives. Almost all the groups enumerated are involved in the marketing of their own products at various levels. Of the nine groups organized around marketing, 8 of them are found in Benue state and only one was found in Niger state.

3.2. Commodities Summary

As stated earlier in this report, a total of 1,298 groups were enumerated in the six states between November 6 and December 10, 2012. The details of their socio-economic dynamics were solicited through administering questionnaires covering various variables identified for the purpose of understanding their characteristics in order to get empirical basis for developing an intervention strategy for strengthening farmer groups within the VCDP.

Of the 1,298 groups enumerated, it can be seen from table 2 that a total of 560 groups are involved in Cassava related activities while 493 are involved in rice. 245 groups are involved in both commodities. This represents 43%, 38% and 19% respectively of the various groups captured by activities. This can be explained by the location of the six states in the agro-climatic zones in Nigeria that favours the production of these crops in the order of interests recorded on the field. Cassava production and marketing is more widespread. While rice is also widespread, its prominence is more in some states (Niger, Benue and Ebonyi) than in others. So in aggregating the overall activities in the commodities, Cassava stands out.

With a closer look into the value chains, most groups are found in production activities as expected. Processing and marketing data

derived from the field does not portray the level

of post-production activities in the value chains. This is because enumeration was designed to capture group formation and not individual enterprises. There is evidence of a good level of activity in processing of commodities but mainly owned by individual enterprises. Many of the groups interviewed have members who own processing facilities which members use or patronize for value addition at a price. So, the total of 84 groups out of 1298 (about 6%) involved in processing of rice and cassava is not a true representation of the spread of activities in processing in the two value chains. In terms of marketing, it can be said that almost all production activities end up in the market. While a only a few groups (9 groups out of 1,298) are mobilized strictly around marketing of commodities and their derivatives, almost all the groups enumerated are involved in the marketing of their products at various levels.

3.3. Organizational maturity

The level of maturity of groups in the six states is measured by the basic structure of these organizations exhibited in the responses received on variables that include the length of groups' operations, membership size and composition, management characteristics, etc.

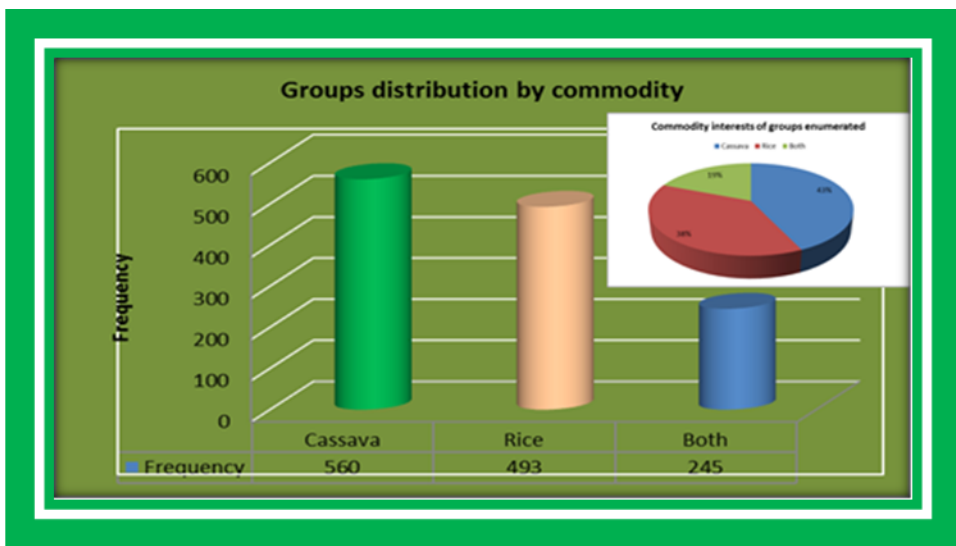


Figure 4: Group distribution by commodity

3.4. Length of Operations:

The table below provides a summary of the responses received from the organizations in the six States in terms of their length of operations of the organizations as they were enumerated.

Box 1: Processing and value addition activities of groups

Processing activities by groups can also be seen as deliberate attempts by groups to add value to the commodities they produce. There are several groups enumerated across the six states who have acquired processing machines either through the help of development programmes or through self funding. These groups however were not classified as processing groups since they were not formed or organized around processing. Their activities in processing were captured within the parameter of level of value addition.

Most groups involved in value addition also go further to boost the marketing of their products through various activities including packaging, promotions and direct sales instead of depending on middle men to buy their products

Table 3: Length of operations of groups

	Niger		Ogun		Anambra		Ebonyi		Benue		Taraba		Category Totals
Categories	Freq.	% of total	Freq.	% of total	Freq.	% of total	Freq.	% of total	Freq.	% of total	Freq.	% of total	
0 – 10	122	12%	128	13%	247	25%	123	12%	175	18%	205	21%	1000
11 – 20	81	38%	34	16%	48	22%	5	2%	28	13%	20	9%	216
21 – 30	10	22%	18	39%	8	17%	4	9%	2	4%	4	9%	46
4 = 31 and above	2	11%	10	53%	2	11%	3	16%	2	11%	0	0%	19
Total No. respondents	215	17%	190	15%	305	24%	135	11%	207	16%	229	18%	1281

Source: field data, November, 2012

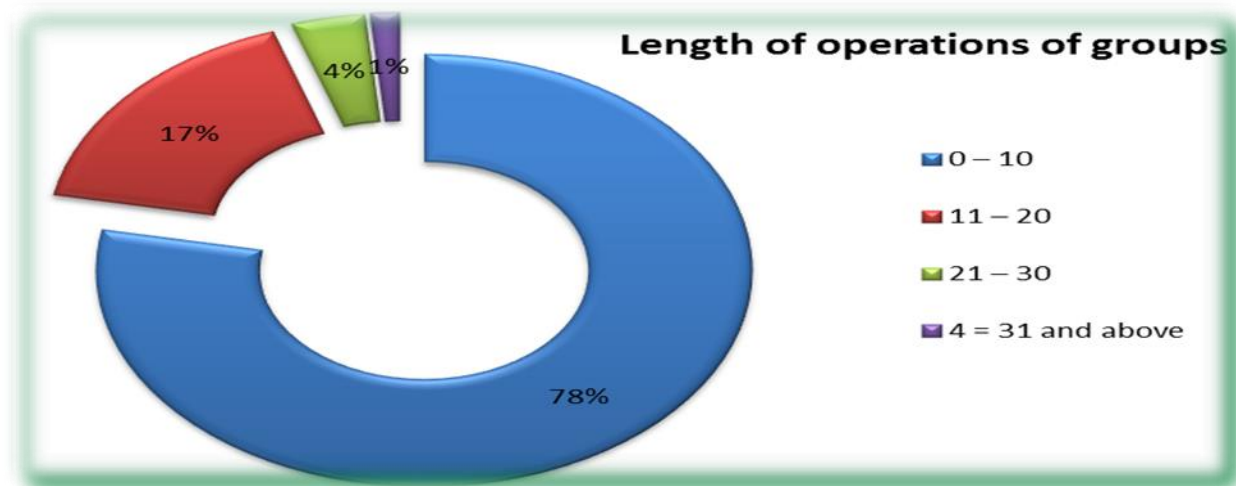


Figure 5: Groups length of operations

In the six states, more than three quarters of the groups enumerated have operated for less than 10 years (78%). The rest (cumulatively 22%) have operated for more than 10 years. This configuration can be seen across the six states. In Niger state, 122 out of the 215 groups enumerated in that state have operated for less than 10 years. Ogun showed that 128 out of 190 groups are in the same category while Anambra, Ebonyi, Benue and Taraba have 247, 123, 175 and 205 out of 305, 135, 207 and 229 respectively.

When viewed against the background of ongoing agricultural intervention programmes, it can be deduced that most group's mobilization may have been facilitated through ongoing and past programmes of Agricultural interventions. If sustainability is driven by self-perpetuation, then the longer the length of groups operations, the higher their level of sustainability. In this case a lot of attention should be placed on sustainability component of groups. Intervention strategy should be geared towards empowering groups to be self-sustaining so that groups do not 'fade out' of existence when programmes driving their mobilization are concluded.

3.5. Enrolment Size:

The enrolment sizes of the groups interviewed in the six states are varied, but a major proportion of the whole has less than 25 people in their membership. It has been noted that most groups are formed by the mobilization activities of various programmes on agricultural development. However, the minimum number required for registering groups is usually the basis of such mobilization. Therefore, for most groups mobilized through agricultural programmes taking place in the state, a membership size of 10 is usually advocated. When groups however expand beyond the minimum, progress towards sustainable growth is deduced from their enrolment activities post registration. Since the minimum required number for registration of cooperatives is 10, no group was found to be less than 10. A look at the chart

below for groups enumerated in the six states shows more than half of the groups have enrolment size of less than 25 people (63%) while a cumulative of 37% have enrolment size of more than 25 people. This is an indicator that people's interest in group formation is high and that appreciable progress can be seen in mobilization activities of the cooperatives post registration.

Table 3: Enrolment size of groups

	Niger		Ogun		Anambra		Ebonyi		Benue		Taraba		Category Totals
Categories	Freq .	% of total	Freq .	% of total	Freq .	% of total	Freq .	% of total	Freq .	% of total	Freq .	% of total	
Below 25	92	11%	136	17%	229	28%	80	10%	100	12%	176	22%	813
25-50	62	16%	44	12%	73	19%	53	14%	87	23%	58	15%	377
51 – 75	36	60%	7	12%	1	2%	4	7%	11	18%	1	2%	60
Above 75	26	62%	2	5%	2	5%	1	2%	9	21%	2	5%	42
Total no. of groups	216	17%	189	15%	305	24%	138	11%	207	16%	237	18%	1292

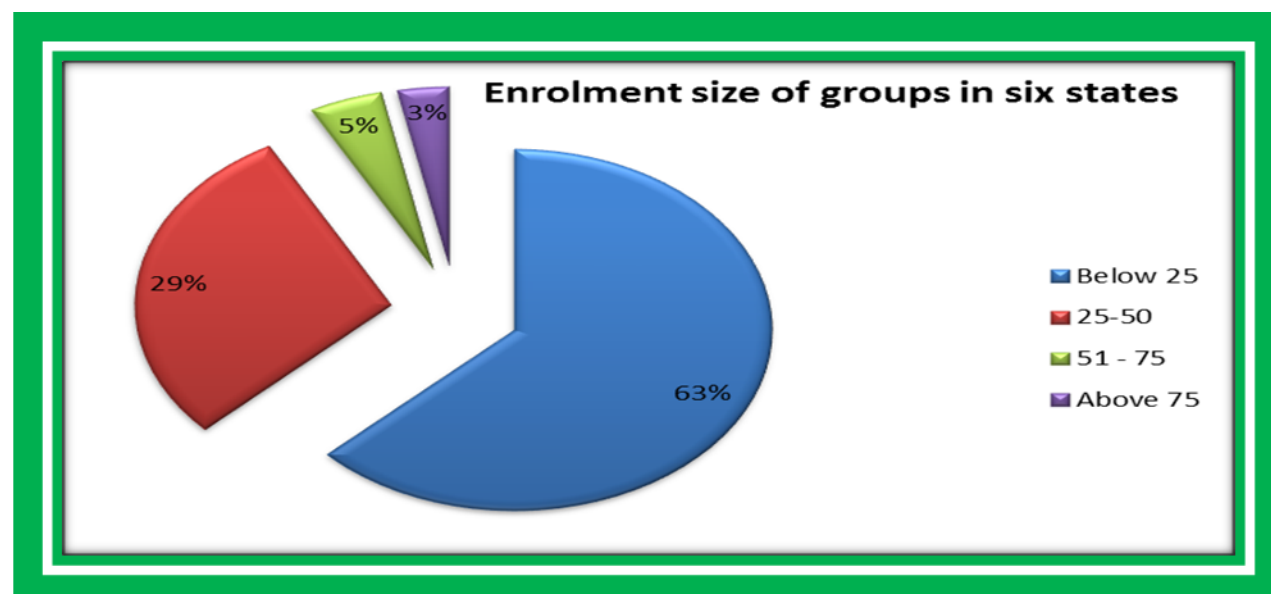


Figure 6: Enrolment size of groups

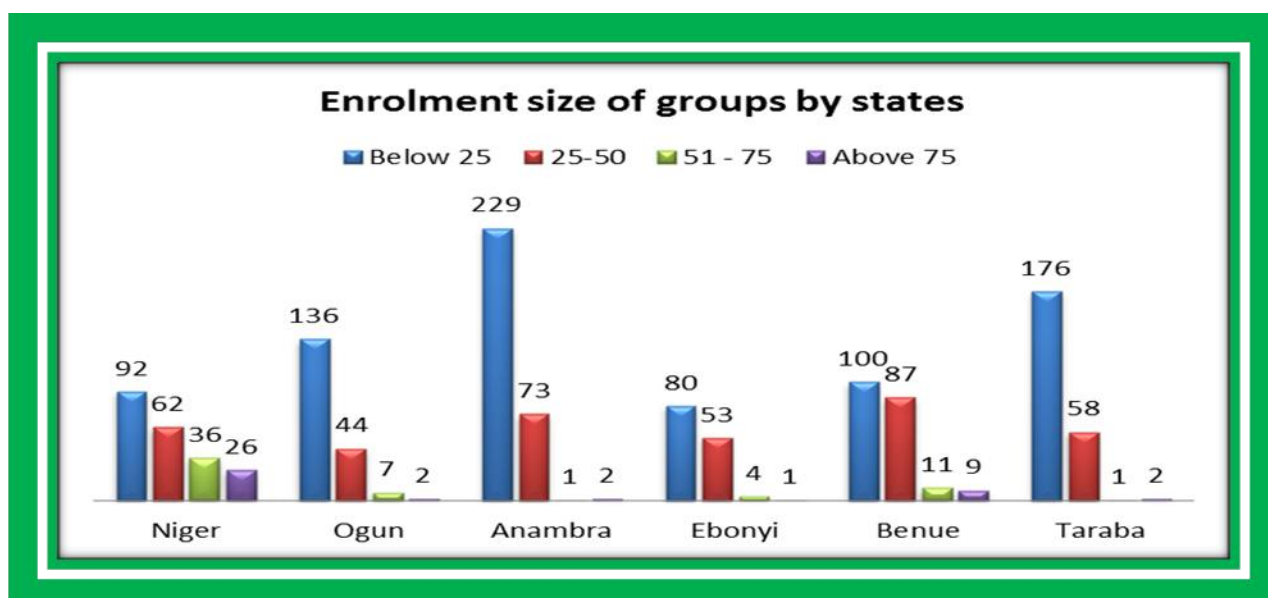


Figure 7: Enrolment sizes of groups by states

In terms of enrolment size distribution by states, the chart shows that Anambra has the highest number of groups (229) with membership size of less than 25 followed by Taraba (176) and Ogun (136) respectively. Benue, Niger and Ebonyi each have 100, 92 and 80 groups in the same size category respectively. If the number of groups between 25 and 50 members is considered, a fair distribution exists in all six states ranging from 44 in Ogun to 87 in Benue. This further indicates that a fair number of groups have been actively involved in mobilization activities independent of the initial facilitation by various agricultural programmes in the states. Interventions in this regard would be to encourage sustainable service provision among groups that will engender interest by the economically active public.

3.6. Gender Composition:

A detailed look at the table above and the charts below shows that only 8% of the groups enumerated in the six states are “Females only” groups while 9% are “Males only” groups. But the majority of groups are mixed groups (83%). Of the mixed groups, 20% are dominated by females while 80% are dominated by males. A further enquiry into the gender composition in the leadership structure of the organizations shows that, 92% of the groups interviewed have females in their leadership at the aggregate level of the six states. This is an indication that for mixed groups, the female members are not relegated to the background especially when most of the groups were mobilized only recently (less than 10 years) through activities of programmes designed with gender dimensions in their implementation like RTEP, FADAMA, USAID MARKETS, NPFS etc.

Table 4: Gender Composition of Groups

	Niger		Ogun		Anambra		Ebonyi		Benue		Taraba		Category Totals
Males only	70	58%	7	6%	6	5%	11	9%	2	2%	24	20%	120
Females only	15	14%	7	7%	12	11%	18	17%	18	17%	35	33%	105
Mixed groups	131	12%	175	16%	288	27%	108	10%	188	18%	173	16%	1063
No. of groups with more Females	43	18%	56	24%	57	24%	29	12%	22	9%	31	13%	238
No. of groups with more Males	172	18%	127	14%	248	26%	79	8%	164	17%	149	16%	939
No. of groups with females in leadership positions	122	14%	162	17%	247	25%	91	9%	166	17%	173	18%	981
No. of groups without females in leadership positions	9		13		41		17		22		0		82
Total no. of Groups	216	17%	189	15%	306	24%	137	11%	208	16%	232	18%	1288

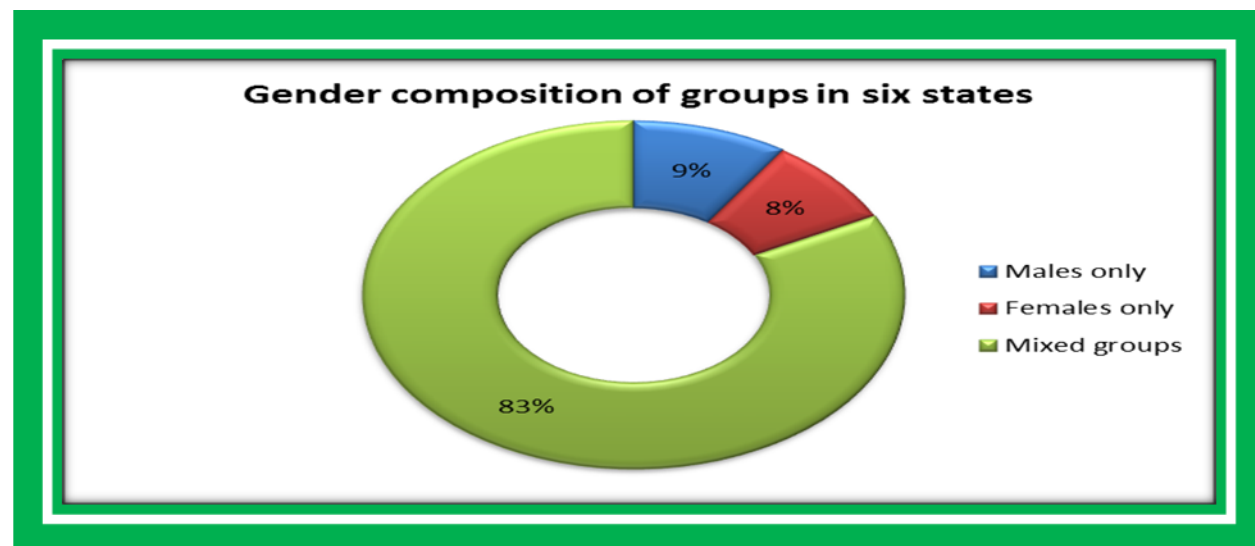


Figure 8: Gender composition of groups

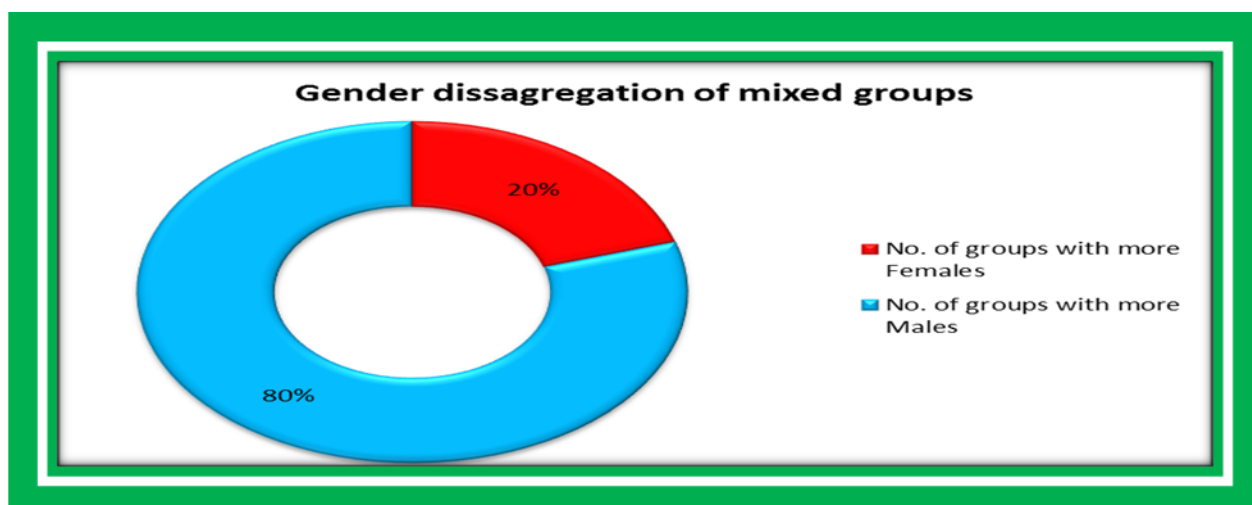


Figure 9: gender disaggregation of mixed groups

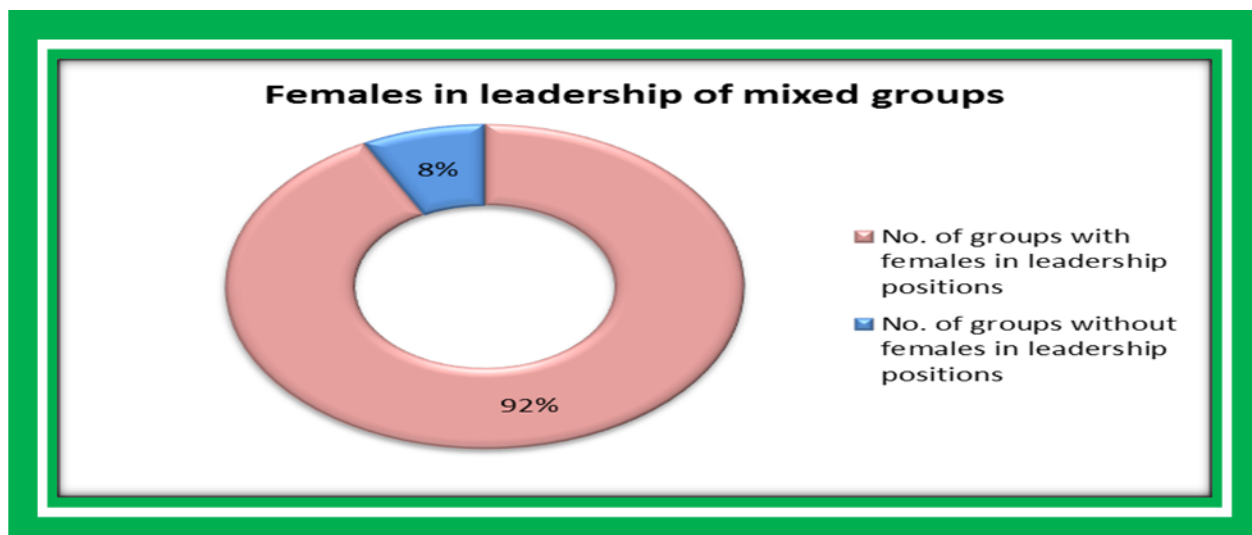


Figure 10: Females in leadership of mixed groups

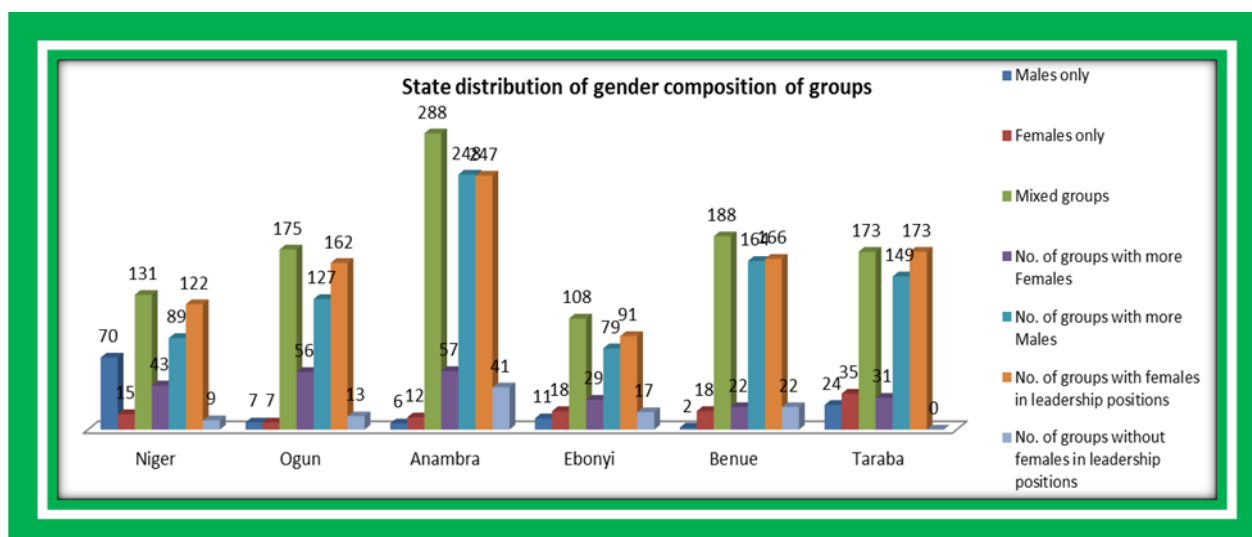


Figure 11: States distribution of gender composition of groups

It must be noted that almost the same pattern is seen in all the six states. Homogenous groups of either females or males only are not as widespread as mixed groups. There is also no obvious pattern relating the number of male or female dominated groups to particular commodity. E.g. in Ogun State where the dominant activity is cassava based, the number of groups with more males is 127 out of the 175 mixed groups. This is almost 73%. The homogenous groups are 7 each. Niger state that has more activities related to rice shows the same pattern where 89 out of the 131 mixed groups (almost 70%) are dominated by males. The same pattern is observed irrespective of the dominant commodity.

Another dimension of the gender component relates to the type of activities within the commodity value chains that is dominated by various sexes. Again, there is no obvious pattern observed as well. Since the production of both rice and cassava is predominant, with only few groups organized along processing and marketing activities, the gender distribution according to activity cannot be conclusive. For instance, in states like Benue and Niger where rice processing groups and cassava processing groups respectively are relatively higher, the pattern observed is that for Benue, the total number of groups not involved in production of the two commodities is 33 out of 207 representing processors and marketers of rice and cassava products. This is about 16% of the total groups. Benue has 18 out of 207 groups (about 9%) to be females only and another 22 groups to be females dominated. These two groups amount to 40 out of 207 groups enumerated. This forms about 19% of the total groups. If we compare this proportion to other states like Anambra and Taraba with females only and females dominated groups having a proportion of 22% and 27% respectively while only much fewer groups are involved in activities outside production, then no pattern can be established.

3.7. Age and Experience of Group Members:

For agricultural enterprises, particularly with respect to employment generation, it is important to identify what age spectrum of the population (particularly in rural enclaves) are currently mobilizing to form groups engaging in production and other aspects of the value chains. This gives an insight into the level of interest in the viability of agro enterprises and to what section of the population this economic activity appeals to. A quick look at the data from the field in the six states reveals interesting patterns that indicate that Agriculture is engaged in more by the middle age category of between 30 and 50 years.

Table 5: Age classification of groups

	Niger		Ogun		Anambra		Ebonyi		Benue		Taraba		Category Totals
Categories	Freq .	% of total	Freq .	% of total	Freq .	% of total	Freq .	% of total	Freq .	% of total	Freq .	% of total	
Under 30 years	38	75%	1	2%	1	2%	5	10%	6	12%	0	0%	51
Between 30 and 50 years	115	23%	44	9%	128	26%	87	18%	114	23%	4	1%	492
Above 50 years	2	4%	30	54%	21	38%	3	5%	0	0%	0	0%	56
Across Age categori cal	60	9%	114	16%	155	22%	40	6%	87	13%	235	34%	691
Total no. of respondents	215	17%	149	12%	305	24%	135	11%	207	17%	239	19%	1250

From the pie-chart shown below, 38% of the groups interviewed indicate that the age of their members range from 30 to 50 years while 54% are across the various age categories. Only 4% of the groups are 30 years and below in a homogenous group. The aging population of more than 50 years old constitutes also 4% of the membership of homogenous groups interviewed. The data reveals that only a minimum number of homogenous youth groups are still actively involved in agriculture while the majority of the homogenous population is in the middle age category that depends heavily on agriculture to meet their personal and family needs.

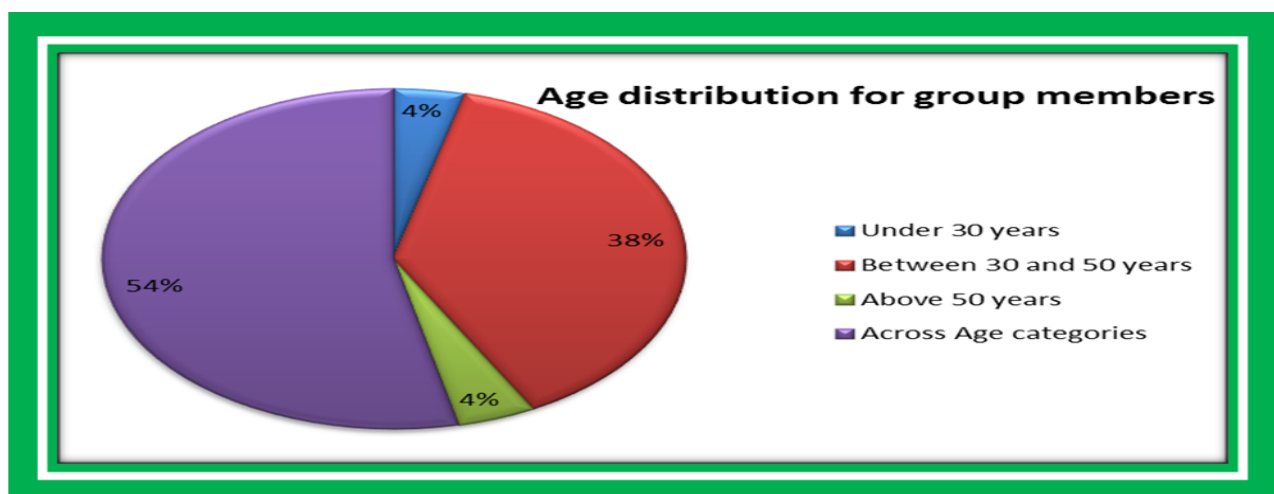


Figure 12: Age distribution of group members

Since more than half of the groups interviewed reveal that they are heterogeneous groups consisting of members across age categories, it is noteworthy that a higher percentage of the heterogeneous groups are also within the 30-50 years category.

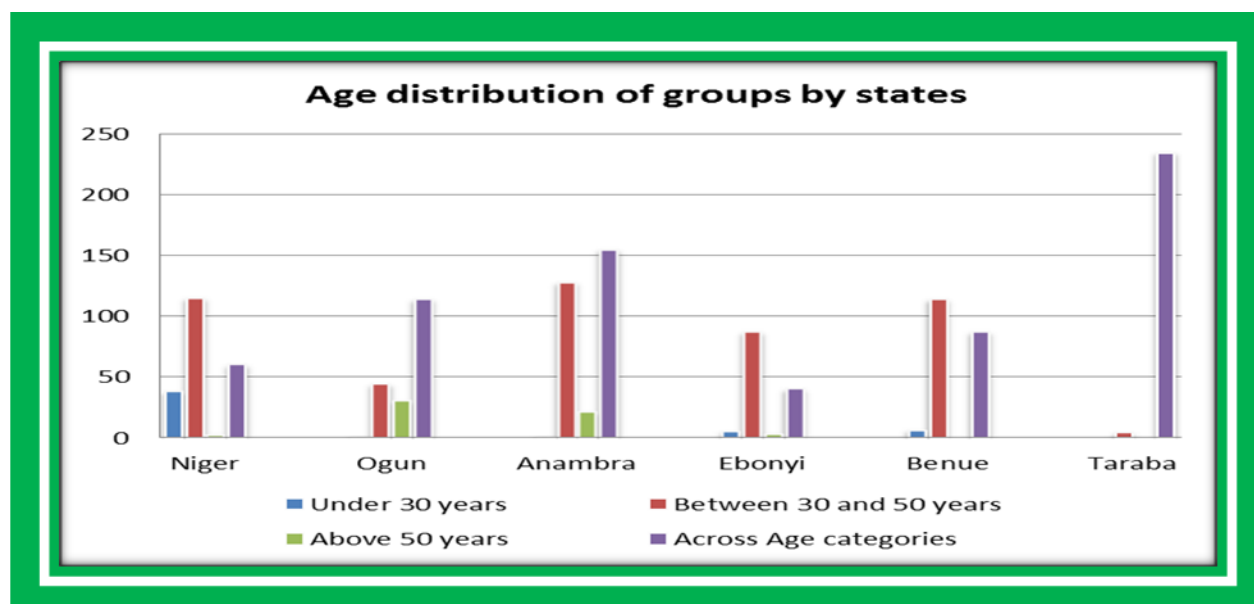


Figure 13: Age distribution of groups by states

Considering the pattern that exists in the states, it can be noticed that Niger state has the highest number of homogenous youth groups (in absolute terms). The reason for this higher number of homogenous youth group is a subject for further study. Since majority of the groups are heterogeneous with various levels of representation of the various age categories, there is no evidence to associate youth's interest in particular commodity or particular activity within the two value chains. It can however be concluded that agricultural activity is engaged in by all segments of the economically active population without prejudice to a particular age category. However, as a result of very low level participation of homogenous youth groups, intervention strategy should also involve promoting agri-business a profitable venture for the young people and encouraging more younger generation to form groups in order to maximize the potential from corporate agribusiness.

Table 6: Experience of members of groups

	Niger		Ogun		Anambra		Ebonyi		Benue		Taraba		Category Totals
0 – 10	120	18%	64	10%	146	22%	86	13%	140	21%	107	16%	663
11 – 20	77	22%	40	11%	112	32%	10	3%	58	16%	57	16%	354
21 – 30	12	12%	27	27%	29	29%	15	15%	6	6%	12	12%	101

31 – 40+	1	2%	42	65%	18	28%	3	5%	0	0%	1	2%	65
Across categorical	0	0%	16	94%	1	6%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	17
	210	18%	189	16%	305	25%	114	10%	204	17%	177	15%	1199

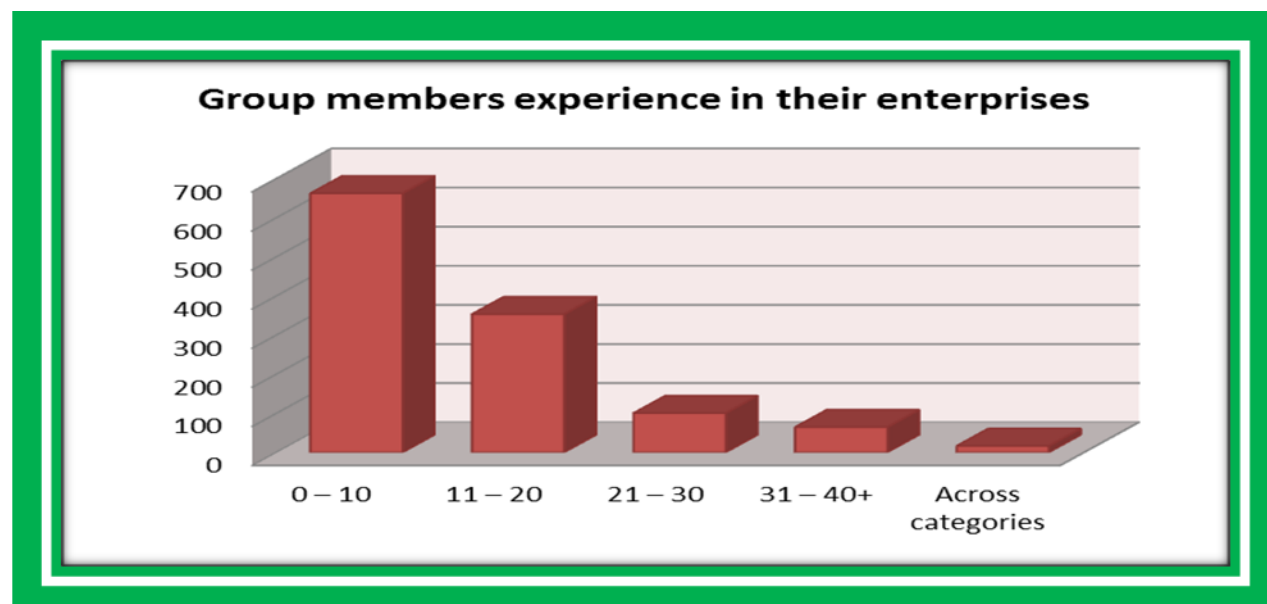


Figure 14: Experience of group members in their enterprises

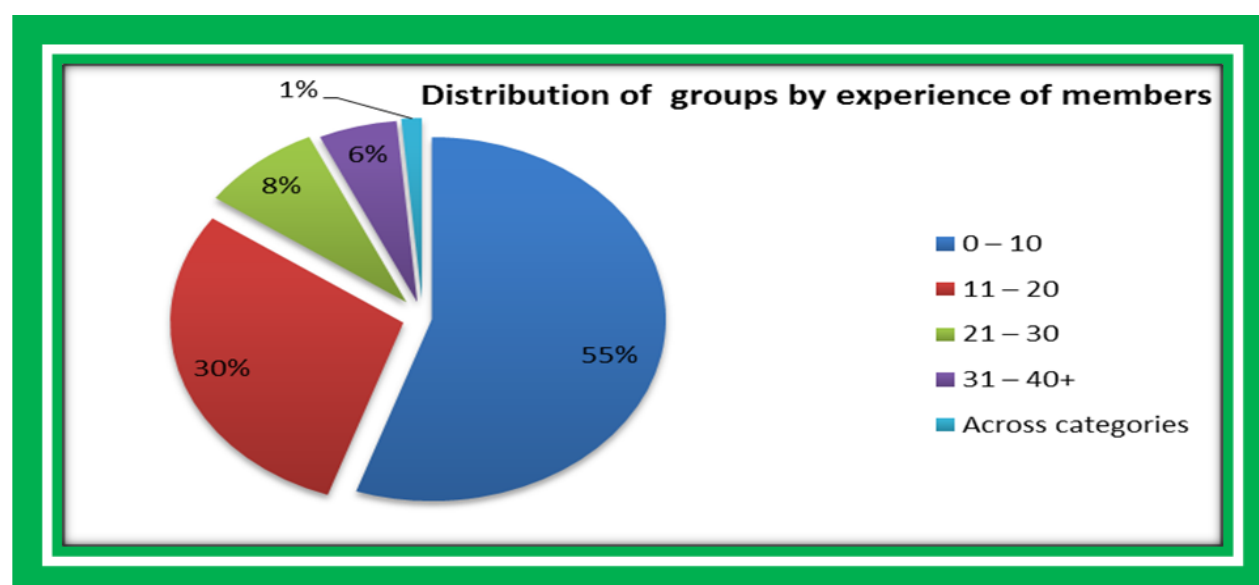


Figure 15: Percentage distribution of groups by experience of members

In terms of experience of members in the agricultural enterprises, 55% of the groups indicate that their members have been in the businesses for 10 years or less. This is significant given that if this is compared with the age of the members, the majority of the members are between 30 and 50 years old. But if majority of the members have been involved in the agri-business for

less than 10 years, then some of the population must have been involved with other kinds of livelihoods in the past apart from the production or processing of rice and cassava. There is need to confirm the validity or otherwise of these claims. It would have been expected that where the majority of members of groups are between 30 and 50 years, the majority of members experience should have been in the 11-20 years category. This is not the case as this category of members constitutes 30% of the groups responding. For very experienced members above 21 years in their trade, they cumulatively constitute only 14% or 164 out of 1,199 groups interviewed.

The level of experience of the membership of groups goes along with skill acquisition, which is fundamental to efficiency and effectiveness in any job operation. The observation from aggregated data in the six states implies that lesser number of cooperative societies have acquired long years of experience in cooperative farming which can have spread effects on agricultural development. It is essentially an indication that farmers with more experience would likely adopt innovative ideas and techniques that would enhance or increase agricultural productivity. The lower the experience of members, the less likely they are to adopt soil conservation techniques and agricultural practices that will maximize yield. Interventions would therefore require a lot of demonstration and active engagement to be able to disseminate techniques that will enhance productivity.

3.8. Types of Services Rendered by Farmer Groups:

Most groups in agricultural activities are formed on the basis of economic interests. However, defining activities to be carried out as a group to further economic interests can be difficult to achieve especially for self-organized groups. It calls for an examination of the identified groups to understand how the purpose of their coming together has helped members. This resulted in the type of responses seen in the table below.

Table 7: Types of Services rendered by groups

	Niger		Ogun		Anambra		Ebonyi		Benue		Taraba		Category Total
Granting credit facilities to members	138	16%	158	18%	152	17%	113	13%	138	16%	176	20%	875
Enlightening and educating members	166	20%	120	14%	296	35%	90	11%	65	8%	99	12%	836
Introducing new ideas and techniques of farming	153	17%	126	14%	297	33%	80	9%	108	12%	124	14%	888
Rendering guidance and counseling services	156	20%	108	14%	282	36%	48	6%	77	10%	112	14%	783
Creating a platform for marketing products	105	19%	70	12%	231	41%	28	5%	15	3%	114	20%	563

Ensuring unity and peace within the society/ dispute resolutions	154	17%	109	12%	288	31%	97	11%	103	11%	165	18%	916
Subsidizing agricultural inputs to members/ Group bargaining	162	29%	13	2%	210	38%	55	10%	28	5%	85	15%	553
Organizing agricultural exhibitions and promotional fairs	84	28%	1	0%	187	63%	8	3%	2	1%	14	5%	296
Fund raising for agricultural activities	189	29%	26	4%	242	38%	40	6%	66	10%	81	13%	644
Lobbying and Advocacy	76	29%	2	1%	138	53%	41	16%	0	0%	2	1%	259
Others	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3
Total no. of groups	216	20%	189	18%	306	29%	138	13%	207	21%	237	0%	1293

From responses received on the various services rendered by the groups in the six states, the highest affirmative response of 71% focused on ensuring unity and peace within the groups or dispute settlement. It provides an indication that most groups come together firstly on social grounds which is the bedrock for group formation. The social dynamic cannot be ignored in developing outreach programmes for groups even when economic development is the focus of such interventions. Introducing new ideas and techniques of farming comes next (69%) in the frequency of responses to services rendered. The extent of improvement in farming practices by local population traced to group activities or agency cannot be ascertained as it goes beyond the scope of this study. However, there is evidence that the ADPs in the states disseminate extension products and services through the platforms created by the cooperative societies in the rural areas. So, claims of rendering services of introducing new ideas and techniques of farming may not be far-fetched judging from the activities of the ADPs and other agricultural programmes that develop and disseminate training activities through groups either mobilized by them or through community efforts.

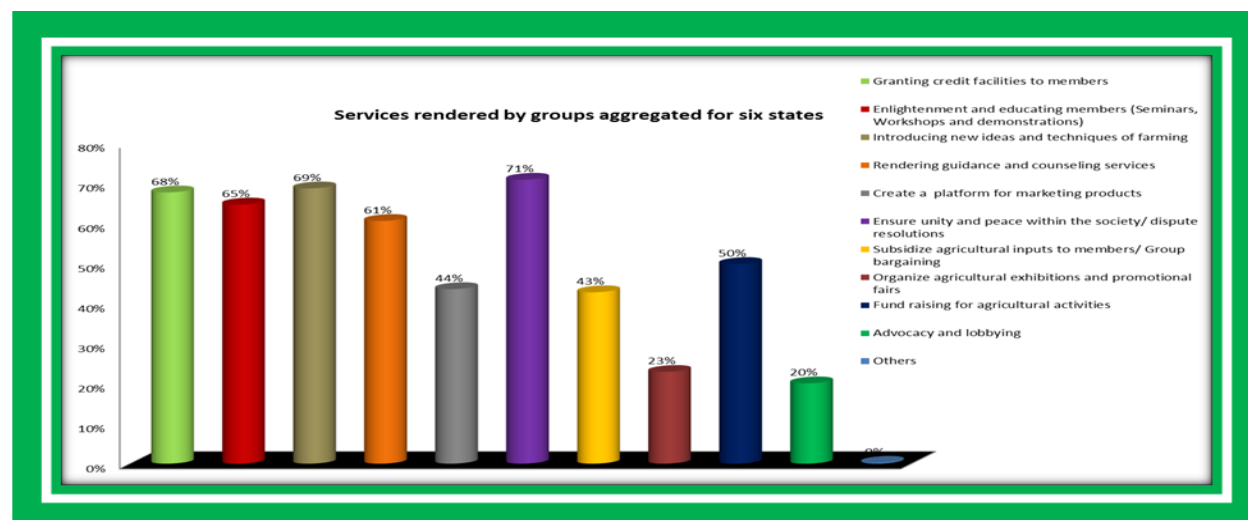


Figure 16: Services rendered by groups

Granting credit facilities to members (68%) closely follows introduction of new ideas. This is not surprising at all as this is one major attraction for enrolment into groups especially for those who are economically active. Other groups also stated that they were providing services related to enlightenment and education of members (through Seminars, Workshops and demonstrations) (65%), rendering guidance and counseling services (61%) and Fundraising for agricultural activities (50%). Creating a platform for marketing agricultural products (44%) and Subsidizing agricultural inputs to members/Group bargaining (41%) were also highlighted as key components of the services rendered by groups across the six states.

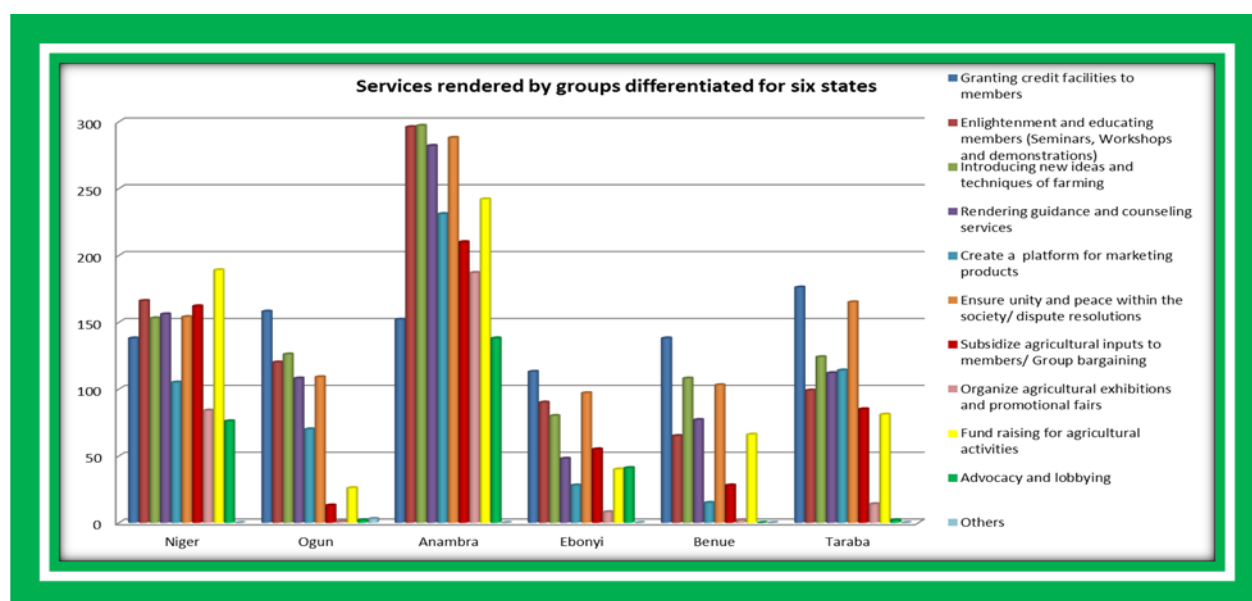


Figure 17: Services rendered by groups by states

The least focus in terms of services rendered by the groups interviewed in descending order include organizing agricultural exhibitions and promotional fairs (23%) and advocacy and lobbying (20%). This shows that marketing component of the value chains is least developed among the groups on an aggregated level. Even when it is common knowledge that market for products with higher prices that gives better returns to the farmers are not always accessible, it would be expected that creating awareness on products and service through promotions and participation in fairs would take a prominent place in the services rendered by groups. Since this pattern is observed, an intervention to enable groups deliver effectively on their focus for members to maximize the benefits of belonging to groups would be necessary in order achieve their economic and social objectives. Strengthening the understanding of groups on the role of advocacy in achieving positive growth of their sector should also form part of the intervention strategy in order to empower the members to pursue policy inputs as a critical component of their development.

3.9. Governance, Management and Operational Structure of Groups:

A typical consideration for the governance structure of groups is how the groups determine their leadership. Groups enumerated across the six states indicate that democratic structures seem to prevail among them. The table below shows some of the characteristics covered in the governance, management and operational structure of the various groups from the states covered.

Table 8: Governance and operational structure of groups

	Niger	Ogun	Anambra	Ebonyi	Benue	Taraba	Category Totals
Governance structure:							
Elected officials only	64	170	274	133	188	217	1046
Appointment of staff with elected officials superintending	7	7	14	5	16	18	67
Permanent leadership (no elections)	119	9	16	3	3	32	182
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total Number of respondents	190	186	304	138	207	239	1264
Frequency of Groups' meetings:							
At least once a week	43	43	21	5	10	22	144
At least Once a month	153	143	264	121	134	135	950
At least Once in 3 months	14	1	19	9	20	64	127
At least Once in 6 months	2	1	0	0	0	12	15
At least Once in a year	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Regularity of Group Meetings:							
Meetings are not regular	11	4	15	131	177	164	502
Meetings are regular	200	183	289	2	25	64	763
Minutes of meetings verified	136	91	125	113	150	98	713
Minutes of meetings not available	74	97	179	16	58	124	548
Total no of responses							1361
Planning levels of groups:							
Plan & implement	169	120	256	112	119	145	921
Plan but do not implement	24	34	34	14	19	39	164
Want to but do not know how	15	8	13	7	44	17	104
Do not need to	1	13	0	0	4	5	23
Written plan	126	127	263	128	122	151	917
Unwritten plan	74	57	42	7	84	63	327

Staff strength of groups:							
Organization with own employees	12	17	14	8	9	18	78
Organization without own employees	200	171	289	117	197	203	1177
	212	188	303	125	206	221	1255
Highest no. of employees from respondents	15	10	10	8	1	10	15
Lowest no. of employees from respondents	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

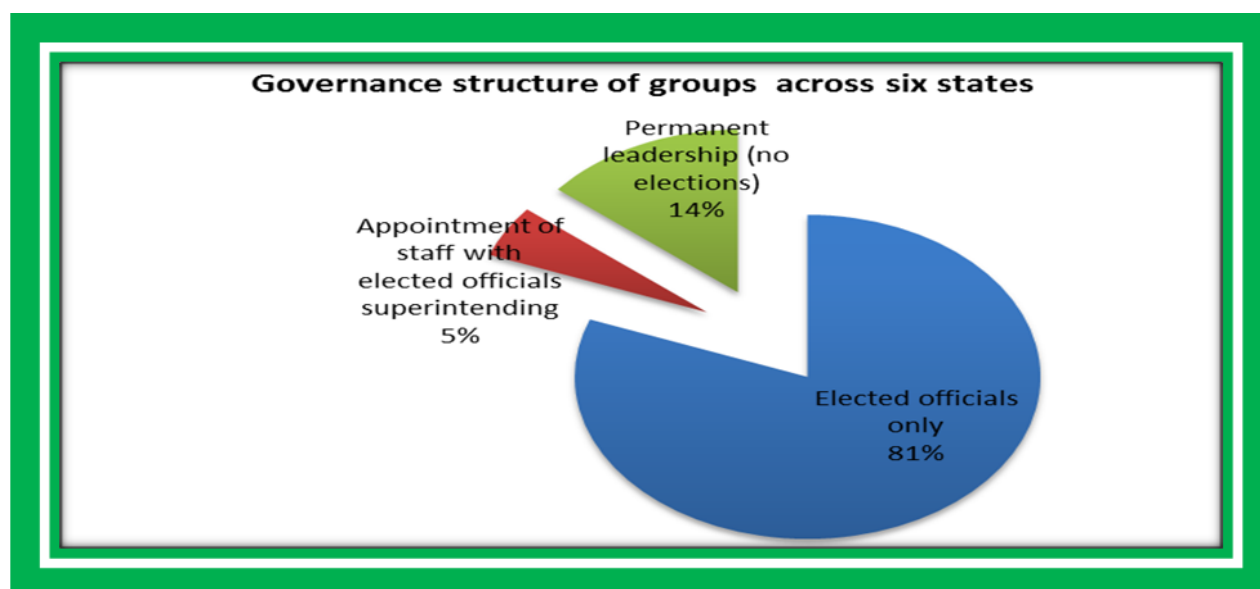


Figure 18: Governance structure of groups

On the issues of leadership determination, most groups (81%) across the six states have elected executive as their organ of management. This is to be expected as group formation is membership based with each member having a right to contribute to governance of the group. It is a requirement for registration that the executives are supposed to have a tenure of two years before another election. However, to what extent this has been followed in terms of compliance with re-elections remain to be explored. However, this is a strong indicator of the groups' maturity in governance where there is no over-dependence on a restricted group of persons to provide direction for the groups.

A significant 14% of groups have permanent leadership with no elections. This fact is driven by Niger state where 63% of the groups from that state have people in leadership who have been there since the groups were formed. Various explanations can range from the people in leadership being the only literate ones or the most financially stable. These people could also be the few with access and knowledge of the existing opportunities that the groups could exploit. So instead of staying for a two-year term, they are almost always automatically returned as leaders year-in-year-out. Since enumerators were trained to ask how long the

leaders interviewed have been leading the groups, their conclusions of permanent leadership indicates that most groups have not had any change in the leadership structure since the groups were formed. This is a weakness that should be examined to make the groups more inclusive in their methods and choice of leadership.

The observation on permanent leadership notwithstanding, there is a significant number of groups that are governed by elected officials while also engaging permanent staff (5%) overall in the six states. This is also an indicator of the level of maturity of the groups as engaging permanent staff to run cooperative activities shows a level of self-sustainability that tells how mature a group is.

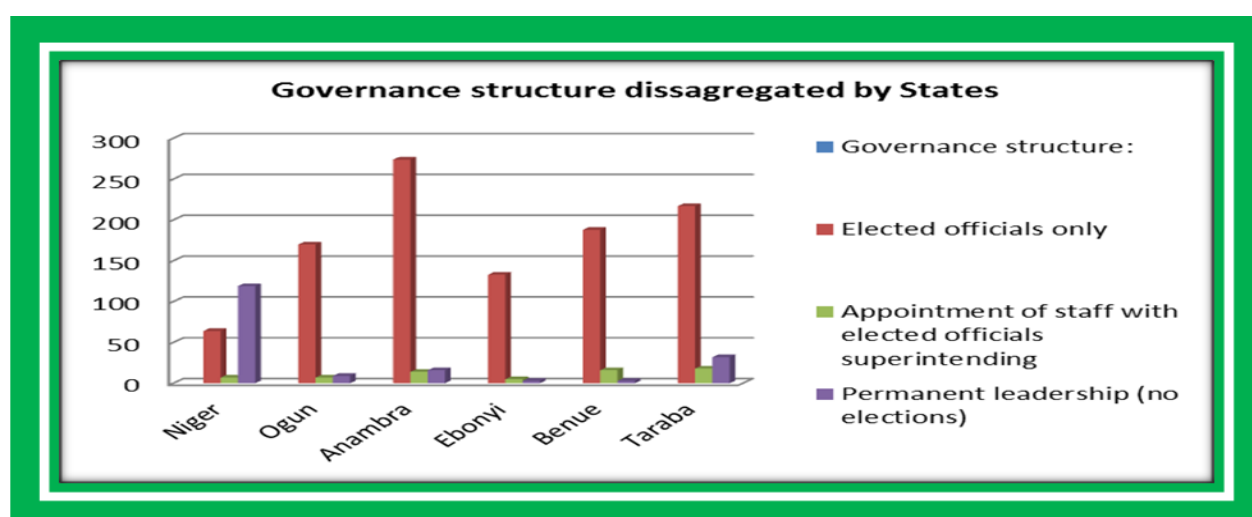


Figure 19: Governance structure of groups by states

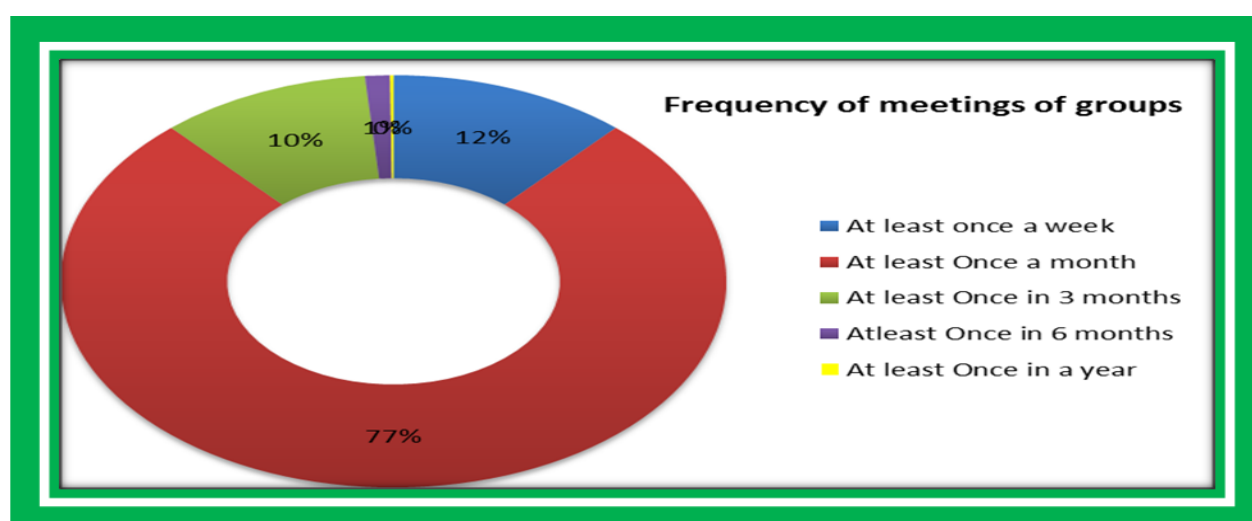


Figure 20: Distribution of groups according to frequency of their meetings

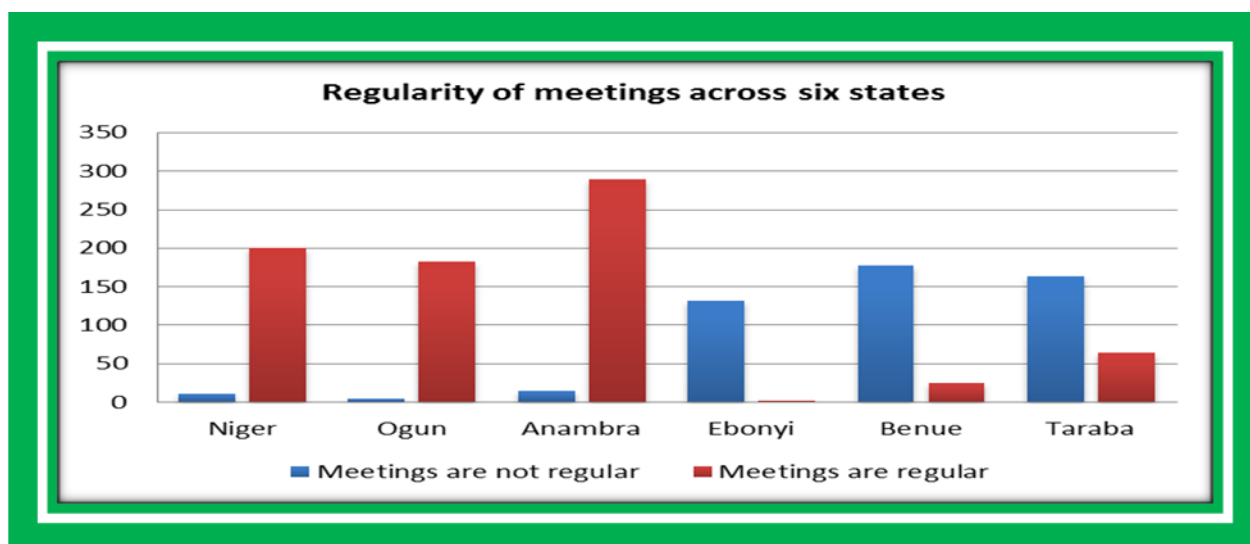


Figure 21: States distribution of groups according to regularity of meetings

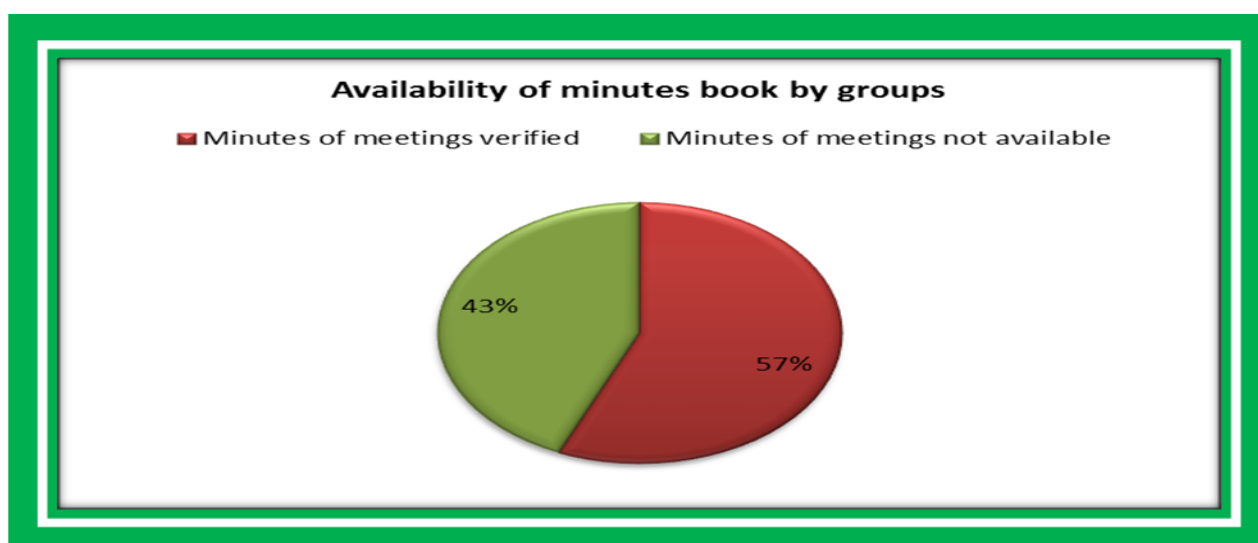


Figure 22: Distribution of groups with minutes of meetings book

Operationally, it would be observed from the charts that most groups across the six states have meetings at least once a month (77%) with a further 12% of groups meeting at least once a week. This is impressive because a cumulative of 89% meet at least once a month. A significant number of groups reported meeting fortnightly which makes them fall within the range of “at least once a month”. Of these groups, 60% claim that the meetings are held regularly while 40% of the groups admit to the irregularity of their meetings. On the regularity component, it can be observed that while Niger, Ogun and Anambra states have a high response rate to regularity of meetings, Ebonyi, Benue and Taraba states had very high negative response to regularity of meetings. But of the claims for frequency and regularity of meetings, 57% of them were verified

by sighting minutes of meetings. This shows that while claims have been made of such a high level of operational meetings (indicative of maturity), a little above half of the claims can be reliable. If meetings were held at these rates and regularity, it would be easy to produce minutes of such meetings or minutes' book especially as only officials of the groups were interviewed.

In terms of the level of planning engaged in by the groups, 921 groups (76%) claim to plan and implement their plans. This is very significant as it shows a high level of maturity of these groups. But to what extent their claims to planning and implementation can be verified, 74% showed evidence of documented plans while 26% could not show evidence of documented plans. This also showed a significant level of reliability on the claims to planning and implementation of plans. It must be noted however, that 13% and 9% plan but do not implement and want to plan but do not know how respectively. The level of planning notwithstanding, the quality of the written plans was not assessed to determine the implementability of these written plans. To what extent they also implement the plans whether written or unwritten is another subject for verification which the study could not ascertain. This provides a strong basis for developing training modules for rural agricultural planning as a way of improving the abilities of the groups to engage in strategic and operational planning processes in order to deliver the objectives set for themselves as groups by helping the groups improve in the level and quality of the planning process.

Another indicator of the level of maturity of groups is the level of employment of staff

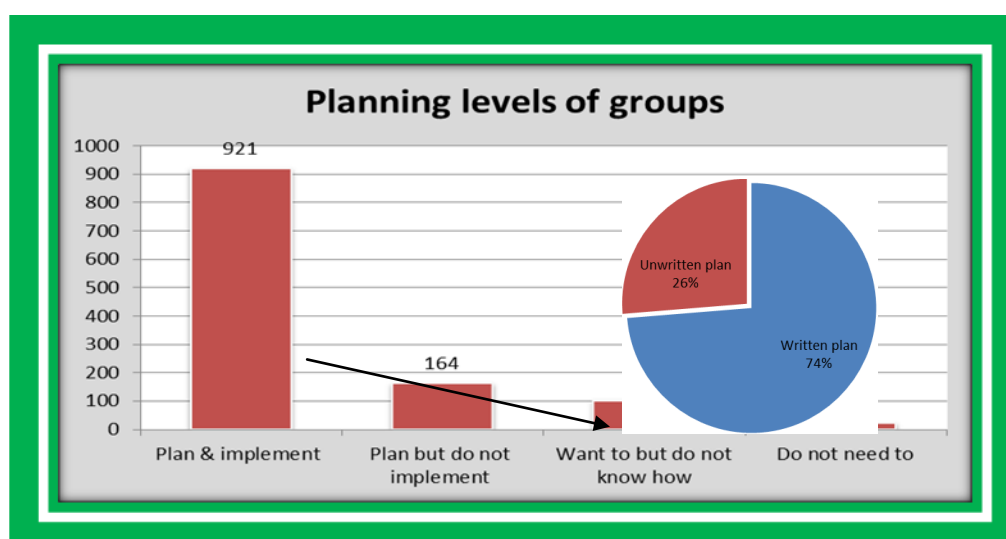


Figure 23: Planning levels of groups

group work and paying a wage for services. On this indicator, many groups across the six states did not score high. In fact, from the table above, only 78 out of 1,255 groups enumerated had employees working for them. This constitutes only 6% of the whole.

independent of the elected leadership. This indicator was used to identify groups that have grown to the point of employing individuals to man various aspects of their

The rest 94% do not have their own employees. So business is strictly run by members. It is a pointer to the level of profitability of the cooperative business independent of the earnings coming from sources other than membership dues and levies. It is noteworthy that cooperative groups who have their own businesses running independently will always have employees engaged to run the businesses. Where such is absent, it shows that the cooperative groups only run individual businesses with group formation centered around sourcing common resources and services for individuals to operate on their own. Sustainability is thus highly dependent on the viability of individual members' businesses rather than businesses run as a group.

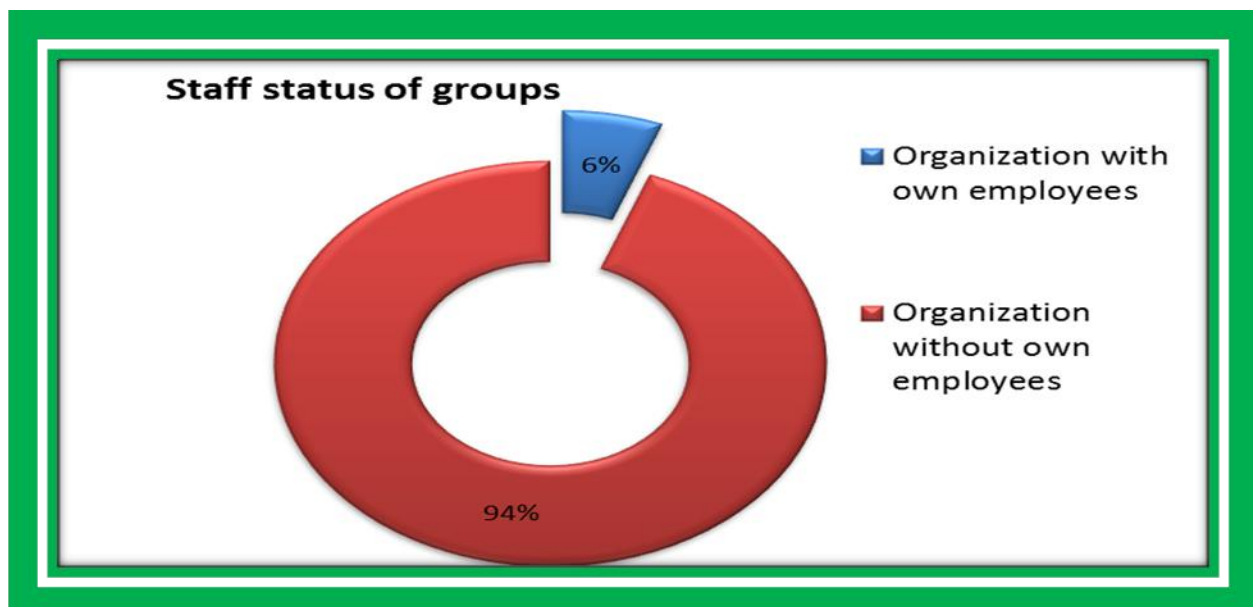


Figure 24: Employees status of groups

Since this is the prevailing situation in the state, a major strategy for developing group dynamics is to initiate processes for instituting viable enterprises that can run on their own while the benefits or surpluses are used to enhance the earning power of members. Such enterprises thus established will benefit from the experience of the individual members and enhance accountability among managers. In considering the number of employees engaged by the 6% of the entire groups, the highest number is 15 staff for an individual group in Katcha LGA in Niger state while the lowest is 1 staff. The claim by groups to employ staff was interesting in its pattern as most of the groups who had their own employees were from Katcha LGA in Niger state. In comparison to the size of the groups and the level of staffing, there was no major correlation as a single group with 422 members claimed to have 6 employees while another groups with the highest number of employees (15) had only 30 members! This calls for further investigation. Fact finding will authenticate this claim as no verification of the claim was made during the field data collection. So, it is possible that this status of groups may not exactly be

the true situation. Further relationships could be drawn from this parameter of maturity. The length of operations of the groups and their employment of staff levels does not have any major pattern shown presently. Some groups that have employees (up to six) have operated for less than 10 years while others have operated for more than 11 years. There is no significant correlation between the number of employees and the enrollment size and age of the groups. This further questions the validity of observed pattern exhibited by groups on the field thereby requiring further investigations particularly for Katcha LGA in Niger state.

3.10. Funding of Groups:

A major indicator of the performance of groups within organizational dynamics relates to the funding mechanisms for the groups. To consider this indicator, the groups enumerated gave responses to questions on their sources of funding with indication of their primary source. The table below shows the responses received from the groups.

Table 9: Sources of funding for groups

	Niger	Ogun	Anambra	Ebonyi	Benue	Taraba	Category Totals
Sources of funds							
Credit facilities from the cooperatives	52	33	70	90	4	31	280
Loan from financial institutions	63	17	36	3	10	14	143
Levies and dues from members	188	186	302	132	170	220	1198
Fund raising programmes	154	5	201	72	58	84	574
Donor/government grants	51	16	78	14	40	11	210
Others:	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
Primary source							
Credit facilities from the cooperatives	3	2	2	0	0	2	9
Loan from financial institutions	3	0	4	87	1	5	100
Levies and dues from members	163	77	265	19	91	93	708
Fund raising programmes	0	0	14	0	2	1	17
Donor/government grants	0	3	15	0	8	1	27
Others specify:	0	0	5	0	19	1	25
Total no. of groups	169	82	305	106	121	103	886

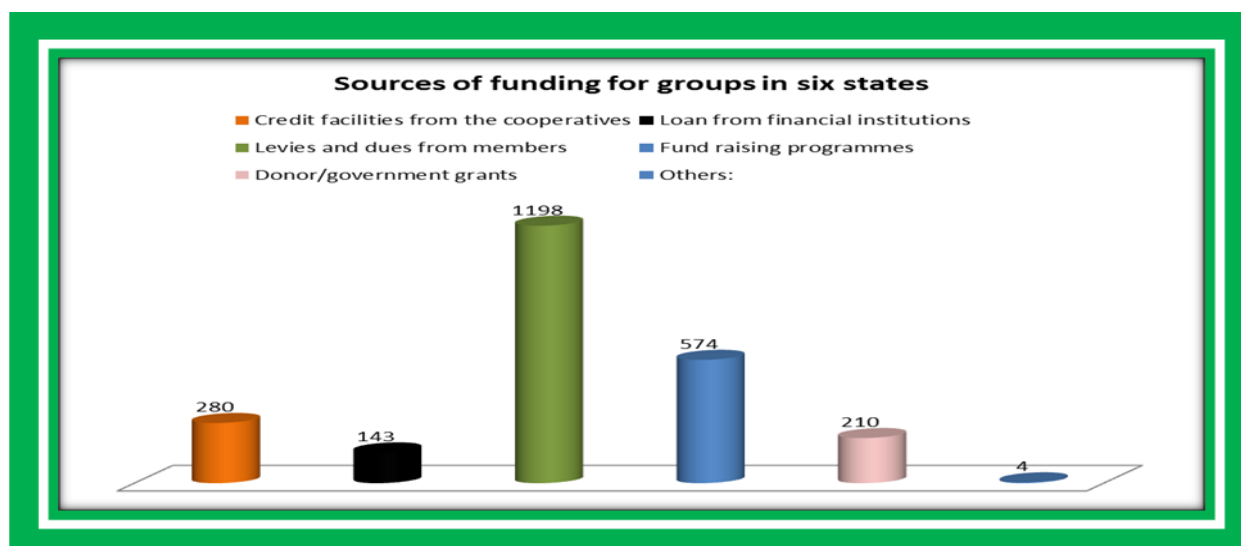


Figure 25: Sources of funding for groups

It is obvious that levies and dues constitute the major source of funding for the groups followed by fund raising programmes. The fund raising programmes described on the field include soliciting funds from patrons and organizing social events to raise awareness on their activities and promote patronage. This is very significant in the sense that for economic groupings, it would be curious if their activities to raise funds are not with the intention of making profits from ventures. Some respondents also referred to initiating business ideas as fund raising programmes that will benefit their members. They also engage in communal activities to raise funds.

Credit facilities from the cooperatives are also a significant source of revenue and funding for the groups while this is closely followed by donor or government grants. This again highlights the significant contribution that past and on-going agricultural projects play on the dynamics of group characteristics.

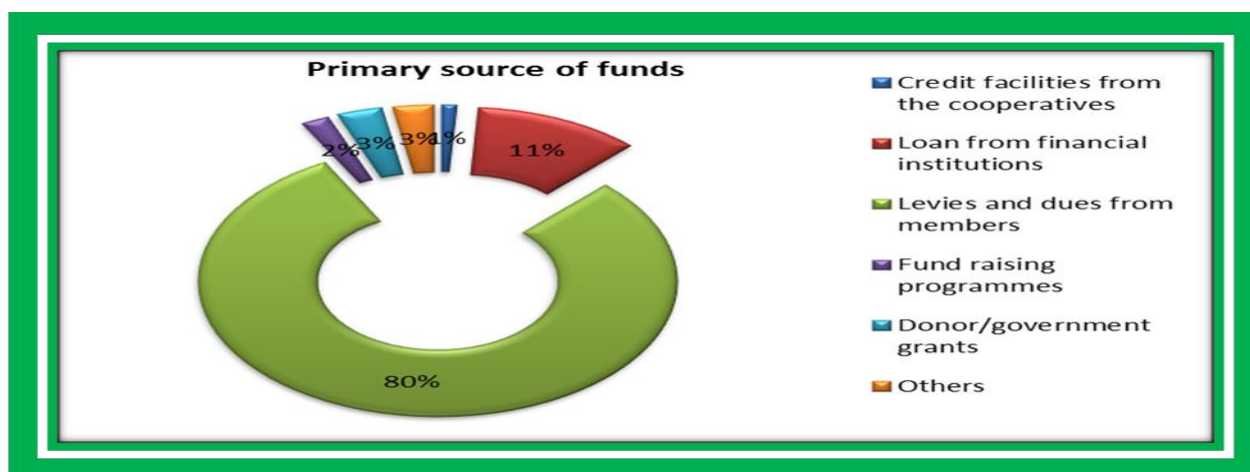


Figure 26: Primary source of funding for groups

The extent to which the groups are self-sustaining in terms of funds is seen as the level of reliance on external sources of funds is quite low. If the data from primary source of fund is anything to go by, internally generated revenue including sources like levies and dues from members as well as credit from cooperatives constitute the primary source of funds for more than 80% of the groups. But the level of income generated from these sources to a large extent determines the viability of the groups. Loan from financial institutions also forms a significant source of fund for about 11% of the groups. How this is operated though is still debatable except if loans are taken out by the cooperatives in order to retail them to members at affordable interest rates that will generate enough funds to pay back the principal and still maintain cooperative business.

3.11. Level of Income:

The earnings of cooperative groups as a measure of their sustainability were measured by determining their level of income. The range of answers was quite disparate as the groups' responses tend to confuse earnings of members in their enterprises against the earnings from cooperative activities. With clarifications and data cleaning, the responses received are classified into four categories. The table below shows the responses received from groups.

Table 10: Income levels and financial records of groups

	Niger	Ogun	Anambra	Ebonyi	Benue	Taraba	Category Totals
Annual Income levels:							
10,000 – 40,000	22	15	53	5	39	78	212
41,000 – 80,000	32	19	33	19	33	35	171
81,000 – 120,000	45	24	24	17	42	35	187
121,000 – 160,000	25	54	51	4	25	18	177
Above 160,000	84	62	138	100	66	59	509
Total respondents	208	174	299	138	205	225	1,249
Financial records:							
Claim to keep records	184	186	293	134	197	226	1220
Do not keep records	27	3	8	1	9	5	53
Total respondents	211	189	301	135	206	231	1,273
Total no. of verified financial record keeping	127	100	124	81	197	113	742

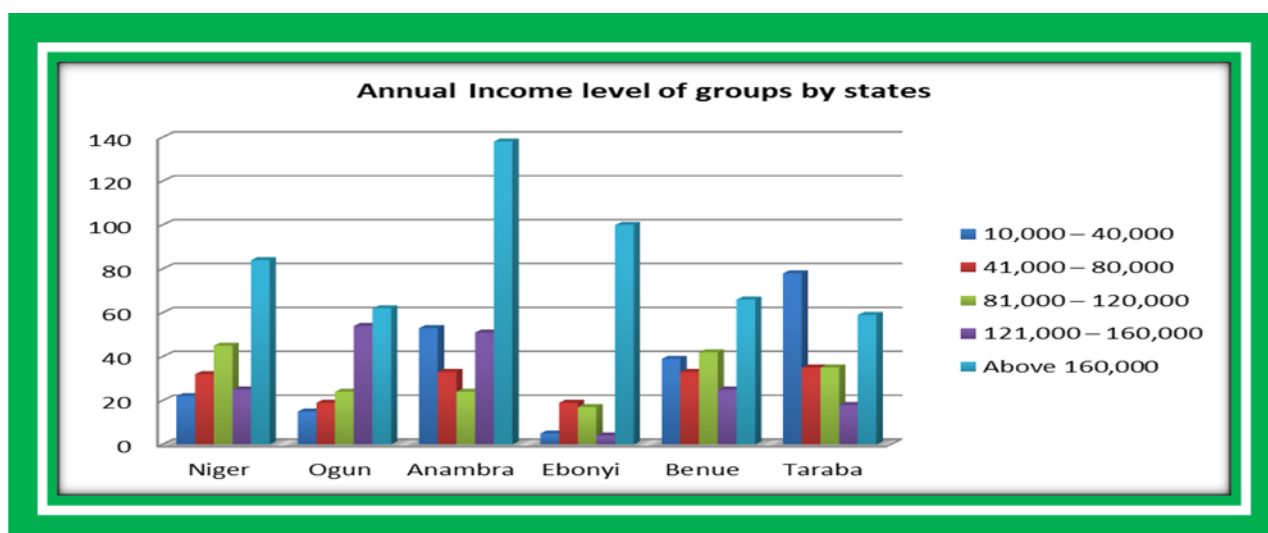


Figure 27: Annual income of groups by states

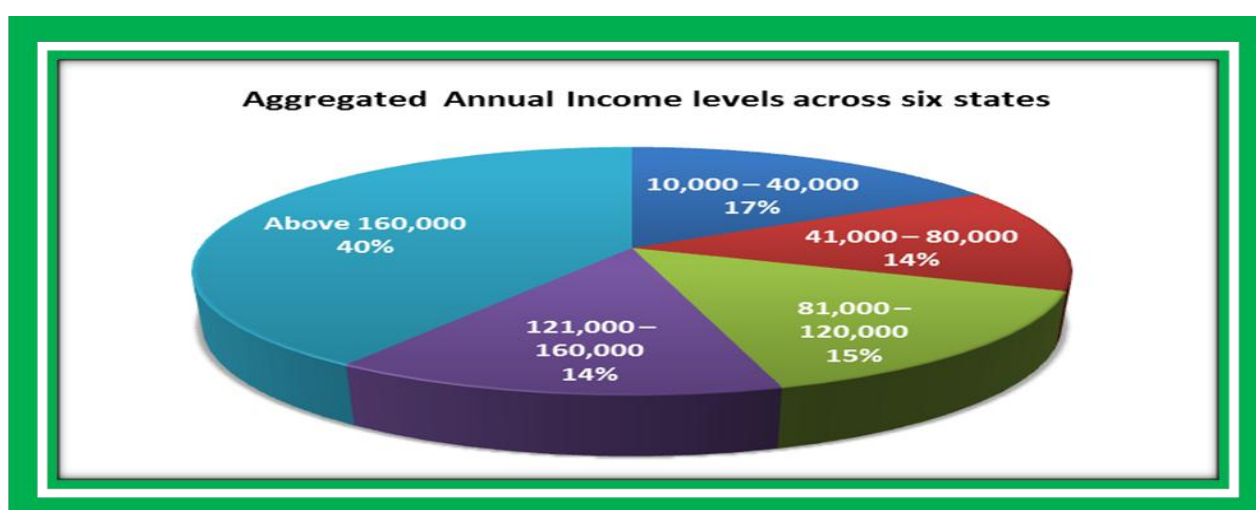


Figure 28: Groups' distribution of annual income

The data shows that a majority of the groups (40%) are earning above N160, 000.00 from cooperative activities per annum. Since the highest source of income is from levies and dues, it can be inferred that the groups with more numbers will always mobilize more funds for cooperative activities than groups with fewer numbers. This picture of earning does not mean therefore that the cooperatives are actually buoyant when their earnings are used for activities that cover a large number of people. Generally, it can be said that the earnings of cooperative groups are still on a meager level for making impact on agricultural development. This is more pronounced when 60% of the entire group earns less than N160, 000.00 for their activities from all the sources of income highlighted earlier. 12% of the groups interviewed actually earn less than N40, 000.00 per annum for cooperative activities. If this is viewed alongside the minimum number of 10 persons per group, the average fund available for activities per person is thus less than N4,000.00 (four thousand Naira) per person in one year for at least 12% or 212 groups

across the six states. This again indicates that access to funding is a major constraint to the development of the cooperatives in Nigeria.

When the states are viewed closely, almost the same pattern of earnings is noticed across except for Taraba where a majority are in the 10,000-40,000 category. This sharply contrasts to Anambra and Ebonyi states where the vast majority earn above 160,000. However, a further study to establish the enrolment size and earning potential may be required to develop strategies at maximizing fund mobilization for cooperative activities in relation to individual and collective benefits.

3.12. Financial Record Keeping:

While the earnings profile of the cooperatives show that a majority of the groups earn above N160, 000.00 per annum, only a little more than half of the groups who claim to keep financial records which was aimed at authenticating their claims actually provided records for verification. This puts doubt on the authenticity of the claims to financial earnings for the cooperatives. From the table above, it could be seen that while 1,220 groups claim to keep records, only 742 of the groups (about 61%) actually showed records for verification. It also points to the fact that record keeping especially for financial transactions that enhances transparency and credibility is still a subject to be considered to give the needed push for cooperative groups to be self-sustaining and access other funding opportunities that may become available in the future.

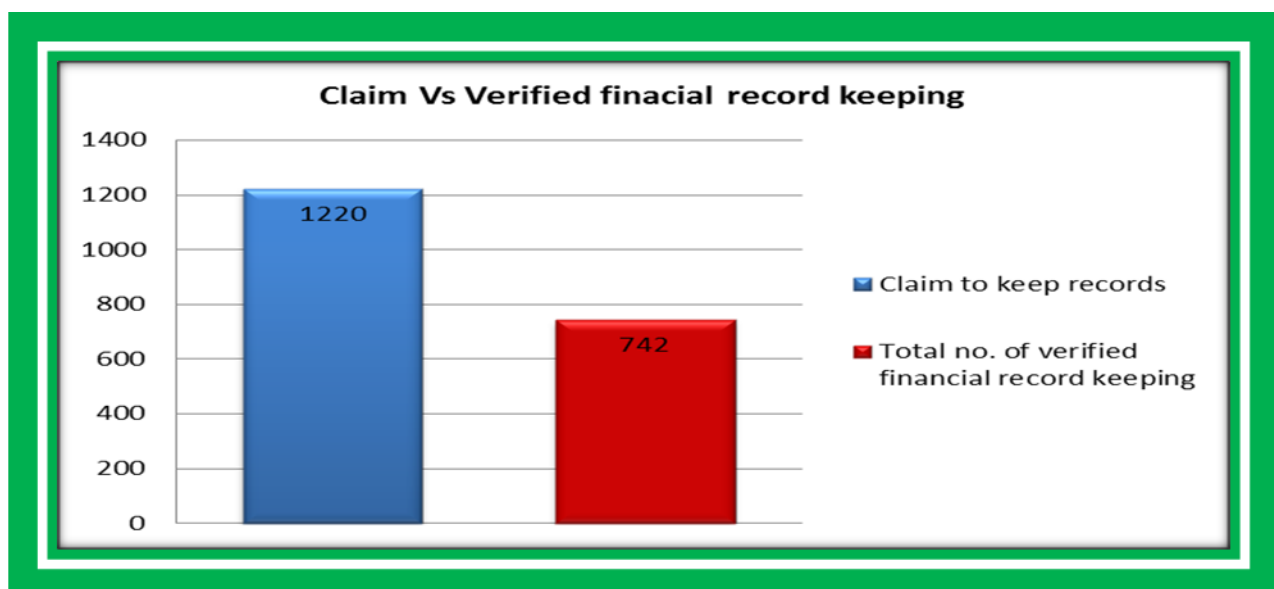


Figure 29: Number of verified claims of financial record keeping

3.13. Enterprise Record Keeping:

Apart from financial records of the organizations or groups, the activities of group members who are involved in various enterprises within the commodity value chain of interests were examined in light of record keeping. Of the total number of groups (1,248) interviewed across the six states, 937 claimed that their members were keeping records of their activities in their individual businesses (see table below). Using the respondents as a representation of the members, the type and manner of records they keep were further queried. 311 or about 25% of the respondents across the six states stated that they do not keep records. This reveals that quite a large number of groups need enlightenment and probable training on record keeping. This situation is more critical especially in a state like Benue where half of the groups (50%) interviewed say they do not keep records. This is followed by Taraba with 82 out of 218 groups (38%) not keeping records of their enterprises. Niger exhibits almost the same proportion of 69 out of 210 groups (32%) not keeping records. The southern states of Ebonyi (3%), Anambra (11%) and Ogun (12%) fared far better in this regard as incidence of not keeping records is largely minimal. This can be explained by the literacy level of members which are generally higher in the south than in the northern part of Nigeria.

Table 11: Enterprise record keeping of group members

	Niger	Ogun	Anambra	Ebonyi	Benue	Taraba	Category Totals
Enterprise records:							
Claim to keep records	141	167	270	122	101	136	937
Do not keep records	69	22	33	5	100	82	311
Total respondents	210	189	303	127	201	218	1248
Types of records kept:							
Expenses	127	160	270	103	97	136	893
Sales	132	134	260	125	41	142	834
Income	146	160	264	114	58	140	882
Profit	136	108	252	107	94	134	831
Harvest	74	95	230	120	62	120	701
Inputs	69	70	203	101	37	82	562
Others	0	0	2	0	0	2	4
Manner of record keeping:							
Unwritten	29	19	32	2	11	22	115
Written, but not organized;	57	69	195	43	35	69	468
Written & organized;	75	79	78	89	94	72	487
Other methods	0	0	0	0	1	2	3

Total claiming to keep records	141	167	270	122	101	136	937
Sighted records	117	79	170	85	92	93	636

For those groups whose members claim to keep records of their enterprises, an examination of the types of records they keep show that records of their expenses has the highest priority. 893 out of the 937 groups are keeping records of their expenses. This is closely followed by records of income (882), Sales (834), profit (831) and harvest (701). The other types of records kept by the groups also include records of inputs used in farming (562) and very few (4) stated that they keep other kinds of records which were not specified.

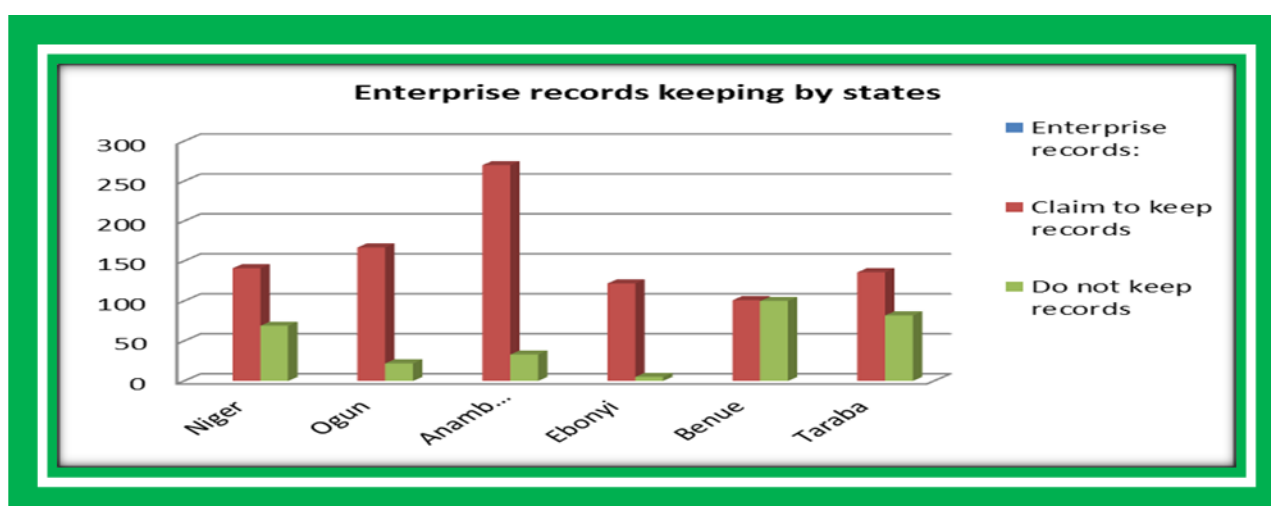


Figure 30: Enterprise record keeping by groups

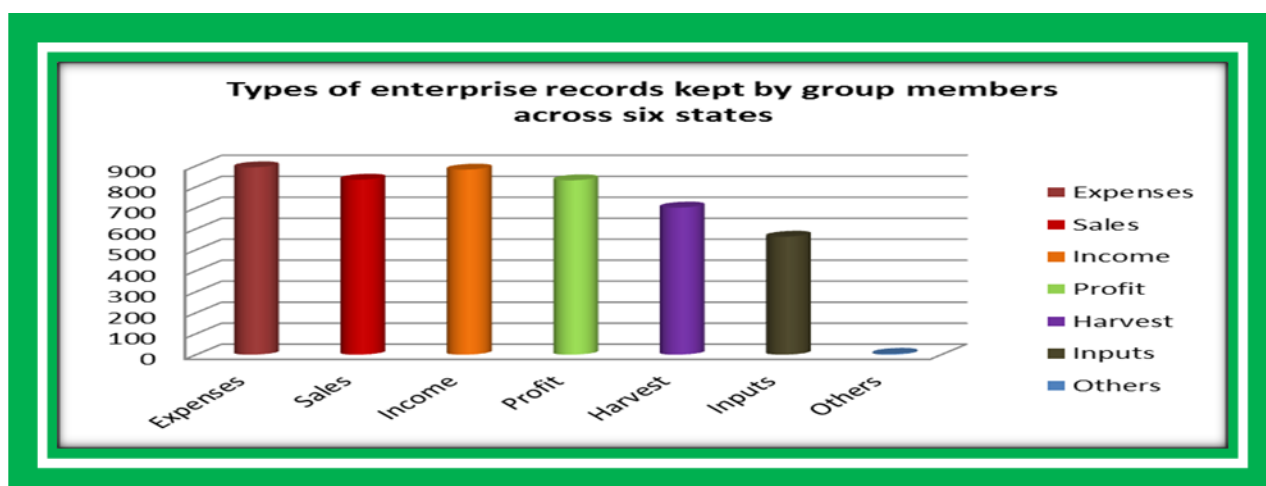


Figure 31: Types of enterprise records kept by group members

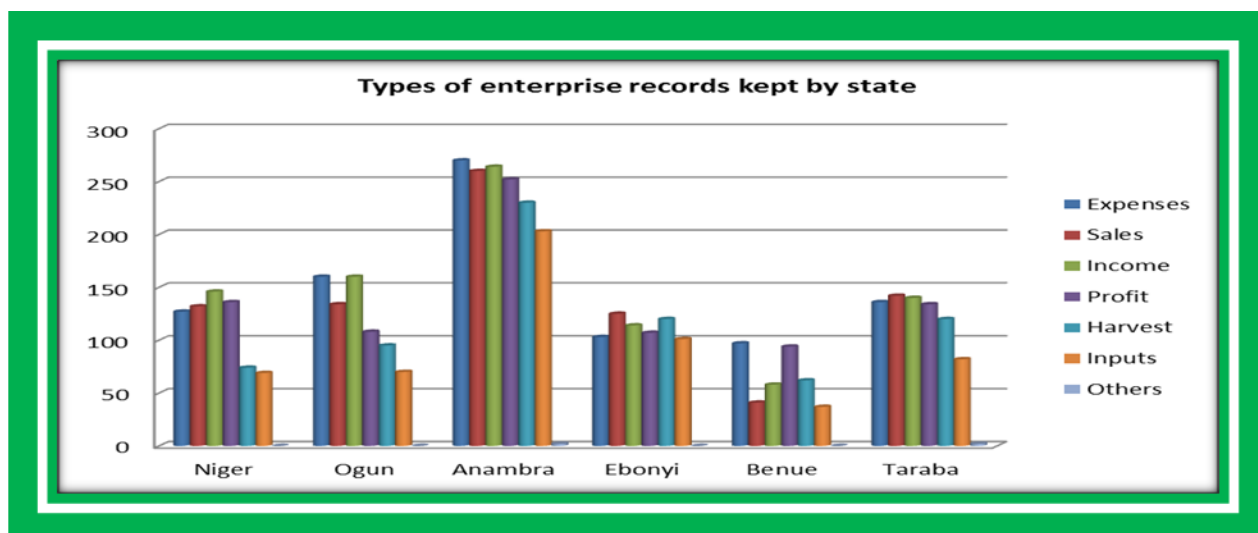


Figure 32: Types of enterprise records by states

It is interesting to note that the types of enterprise records kept across the states do not show any significant deviation from the patterns in all the states. The significant part of the record keeping component however, has to do with the manner these records are kept. The table above and the chart below indicate that 45% of the groups interviewed claim to have their records written and organized while 44% state that their records are written but not organized properly. Only 11% of the respondents stated that they kept unwritten records.

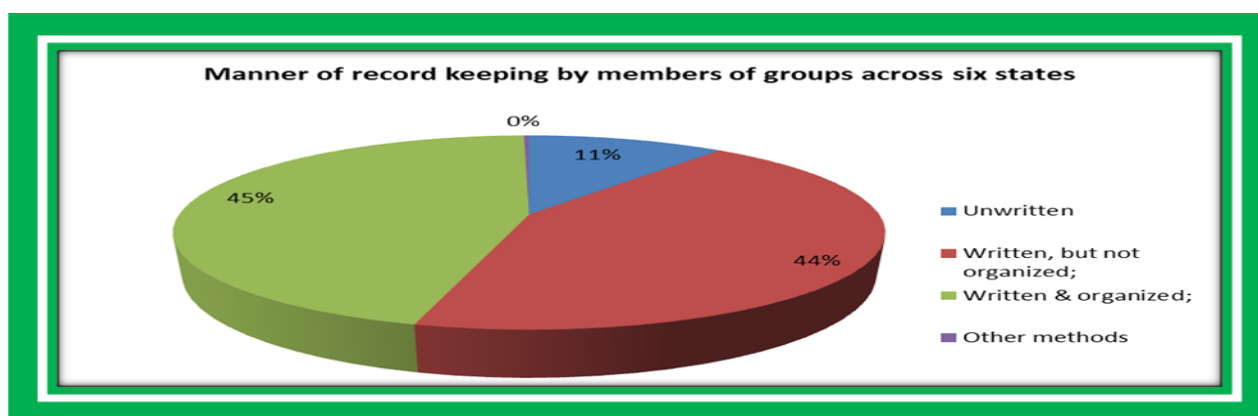


Figure 33: Manner of record keeping by groups

Unwritten records here means that they probably kept empty containers or symbols to show how much or how many of their items were bought, sold, used or harvested depending on the items they are monitoring with some form of records. For the written but not organized, many of them showed invoices and receipts stored for future references but no books are kept. Some often write things on pieces of papers to remind them of things they expended or received but many times these papers get lost especially after the crop season is over.

With regard to verification of those who claim to keep enterprise records, evidence of records produced showed that the claims are largely correct as the table showed that almost 70% of the groups across the six states had a form of record to validate their claims. See chart below.

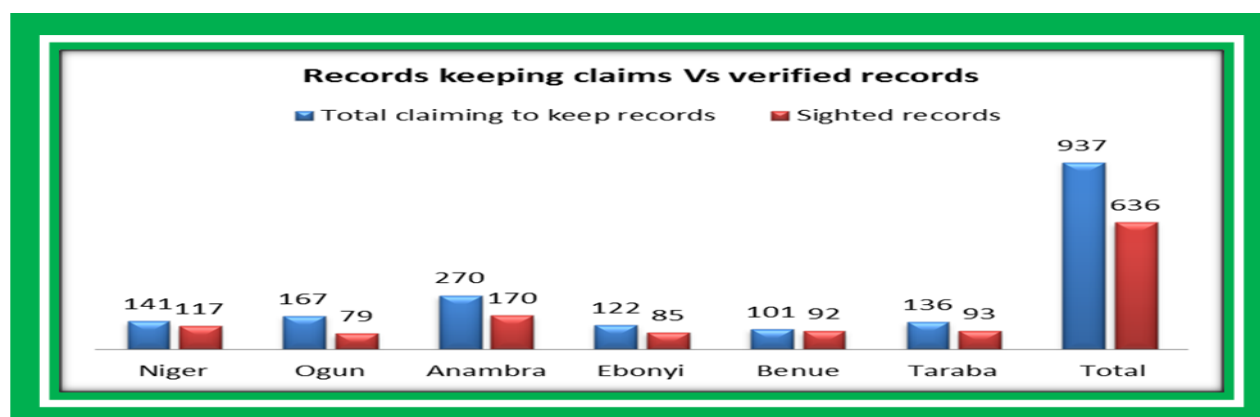


Figure 34: Number of verified records by states

3.14. External Relationships of Groups:

Another major variable in the socio-economic characteristics of groups considered is their level of networking and interaction with external bodies as part of their normal operations. The table below presents responses from groups across the six states on various dimensions of external networking.

Table 12: External relationships of groups

	Niger	Ogun	Anambra	Ebonyi	Benue	Taraba	Total
External Relationships							
Membership of other networks	61	105	114	8	54	29	371
No membership with other networks	146	84	188	115	91	183	807
Total responses	207	189	302	123	145	212	1178
Collaboration with other bodies	20	88	13	9	63	26	219
No collaboration with external bodies	185	101	290	118	132	184	1010
	205	189	303	127	195	210	1229
Assistance/Intervention from external bodies	48	86	120	19	85	44	402
No assistance/Intervention from external bodies	157	102	181	108	115	175	838
Total responses	205	188	301	127	200	219	1240
Results of interventions							
Improvement in farming practices	39	80	113	16	67	84	399
Increased access to credit/funds	10	21	44	6	14	38	133
Improved management practices (record keeping, accounting practice, crop budgeting, etc.)	11	61	107	9	59	64	311

Increased production/processing/marketing capacity	24	71	109	14	73	73	364
Increased access to improved variety of seeds/inputs/machinery	16	61	93	15	41	56	282
Advocacy							
Have influenced government policy before	24	45	4	18	43	60	194
Have not influenced government policy before	163	143	272	111	134	155	978
Total responses	187	188	276	129	177	215	1172

3.15. Membership of other networks:

In considering external relationships, groups were asked if they belonged to other networks as members. This is with a view to determining the links between apex umbrella groups and grass roots organizations in the rural areas. The data from the field shows that 371 of the 1,178 groups (31%) interviewed had membership with other networks. Prominent among these groups that enumerated cooperatives belong to are the networks created by agricultural programmes of the government and or donor bodies. FADAMA and NPFS appear to have the highest number of groups associated with them. From the responses received, it was obvious that the activities of these agricultural programmes create a sense of belonging for the groups interviewed.

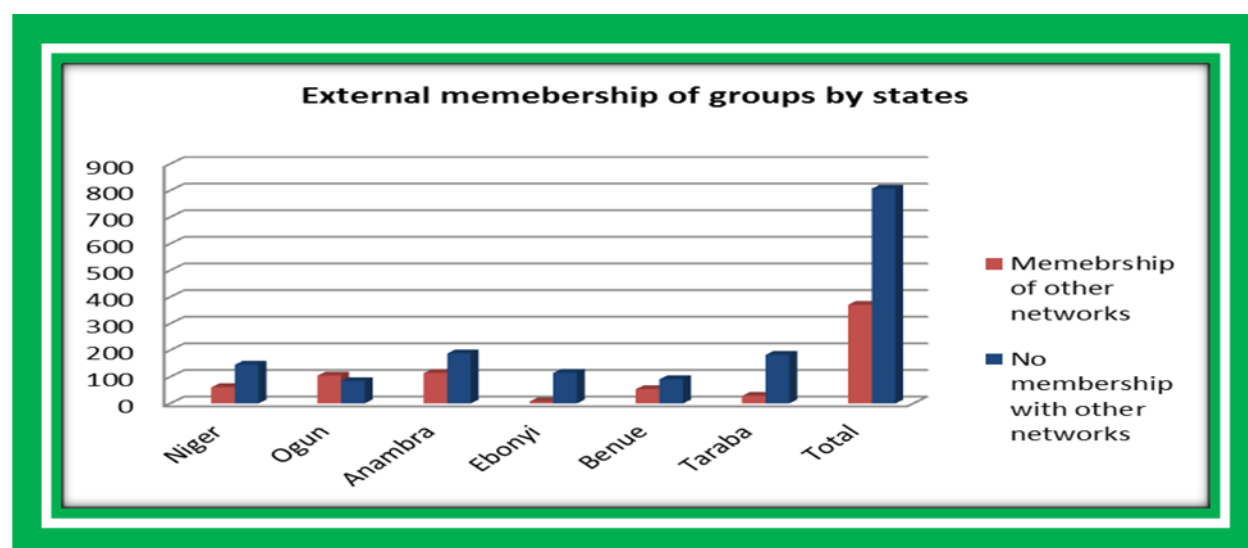


Figure 35: Membership of groups to external networks

A number of the groups also belong to umbrella bodies like Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN), the Nigerian Cassava Growers Association, National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS) and Apex Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN). It can be seen from states disaggregation that the high membership of networks are driven by Ogun and Anambra states who indicated that they belonged to groups mainly formed as a result of intervention programmes by the Federal government and donor programmes. USAID MARKETS is also seen

by many of the groups particularly in Anambra and Ebonyi states as bodies that they belonged to. It must be noted however that the agricultural projects by the government or donor agencies are not supposed to be networks themselves but just facilitators. Ogun state also featured a high number of groups belonging to cooperative unions which are conglomeration of cooperative societies with common interests usually facilitated by the state department of cooperatives.

While a large number of groups belong to one form of network or the other, the vast majority seem to work in isolation. 69% of the aggregated groups across the six states stated that they do not belong to any network. It calls attention to the workings of the various apex bodies in connecting the grassroots cooperative groups with their activities.

3.16. Collaboration with other groups:

Another type of interaction was queried by asking if groups have collaborated with other groups in the past even if they do not belong to a common network as members. To this query, 219 groups out of 1,229 answered in the affirmative. This is just about 18% of the total groups enumerated. The vast majority have not collaborated with other groups in the past. Even for the groups that answered in the affirmative, many of them specified that they have collaborated with the state ADPs or other agricultural programmes. The intention of the query was to see the level of interaction among complimentary groups in a bid to foster development of their sector and pooling resources for the mutual benefit of all members concerned. This kind of interaction seems to be near absent among the groups interviewed. See chart below.

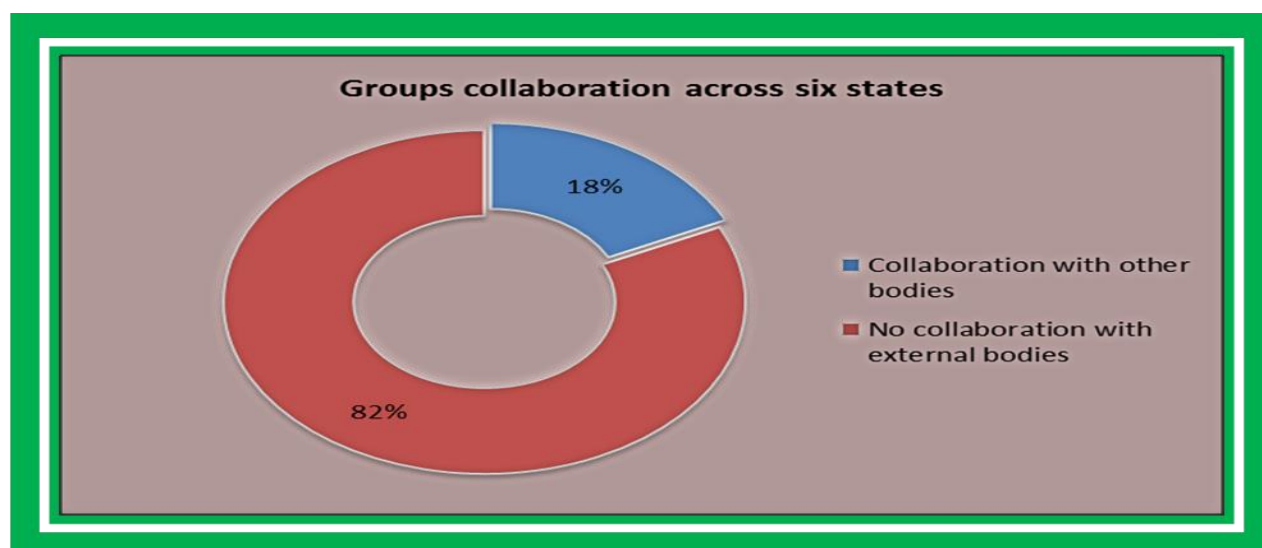


Figure 36: Groups' collaboration with others

3.17. External Assistance or Interventions:

Apart from exploring the level of collaboration among groups, determining the extent of interventions received from external sources including government and donor programmes was attempted with the groups interviewed. The responses as indicated in the table show that majority (68%) have not had any assistance or interventions from external sources. This is an interesting subject that requires further verification because many of the groups were formed or facilitated by various programmes and stating that no intervention has been received shows either a disconnect between the groups and the programmes that facilitated their formation or that the groups do not consider the various programmes facilitated by ongoing or past projects as assistance or interventions. For instance, records show that USAID markets in mobilizing its groups around the states of their operations have delivered various trainings on various subjects aimed at developing the groups. The National Programme for Food Security (NPFS) has done same to almost all the groups mobilized under their programming. FADAMA I – III have done much more than trainings and Roots and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP) as well as RUFIN have also done a lot of work to mobilize groups and delivered groups in these states in the past.

It is therefore surprising when as much as 68% of these groups enumerated claim that they have not received any intervention or assistance in the past. It means that the definition of assistance by the groups is associated mainly with cash or materials grants, inputs or equipment provision, infrastructure or facility construction, etc. They mainly consider tangible physical items as assistance while ignoring training and demonstrations as no assistance. This should provide an idea of the attitude of the groups towards programming design. There may be need for re-orientation programmes either through the ADPs or other platforms to make groups consider intangibles as valuable to their development.

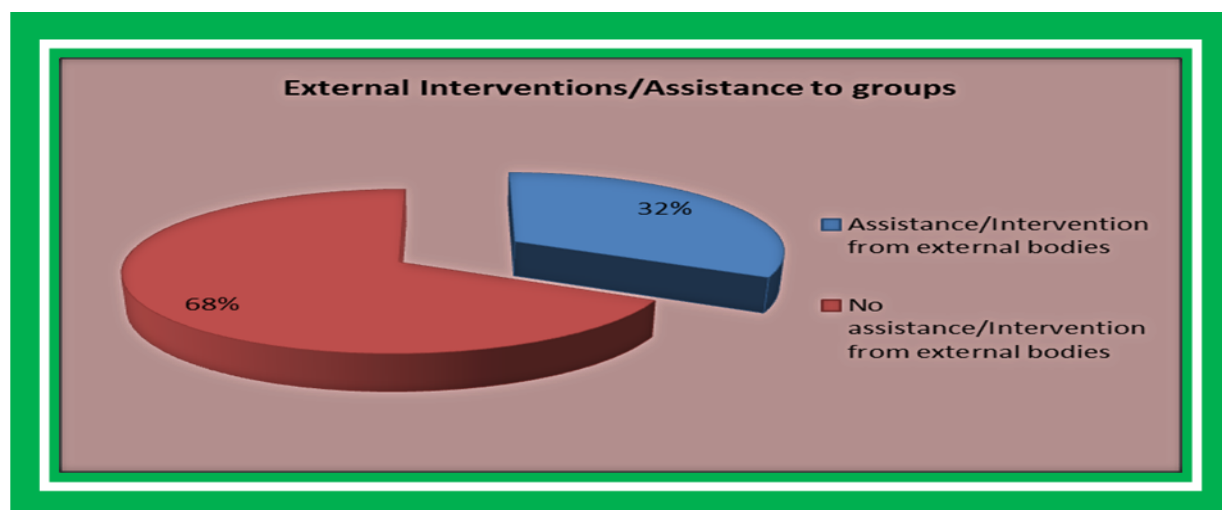


Figure 37: External Interventions received by groups

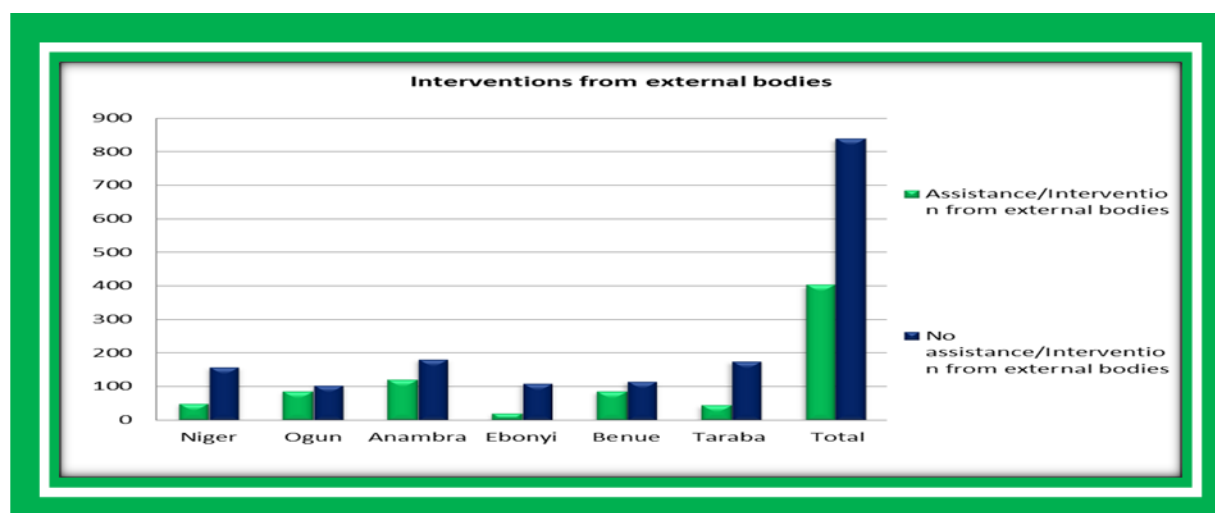


Figure 38: External Interventions received by groups by states

3.18. Results of External Assistance or Interventions:

For groups that admitted to receiving assistance from external bodies (32%), an attempt at evaluating how the assistance received helped the groups to perform their services better or improved their socio-economic well-being was also explored. The table above and the chart below suggest that the most change occurred in improvement in farming practices. Increased production/processing/marketing capacity naturally follows as it is envisaged that if there is improved farming practices, there will be increased production. Improved management practice follows next, indicating that training and capacity building initiatives actually delivered results for a large number of groups that considered such interventions as important to the development. A subject of further analysis is to determine a causal relationship between record keeping habit (or any other indicator of good management practice) of groups and training received. This study did not cover that scope.

Increased access to improved variety of inputs or machinery was also given the pride of place as a direct result of external intervention or assistance. The lowest response was received on increased access to credit/funds. Considering that access to credits/funds has been at the fore front of advocacy for small scale farmers, it is curious to see that groups across the six states do not consider access to credits or funds for agricultural activities to result from external assistance or interventions.

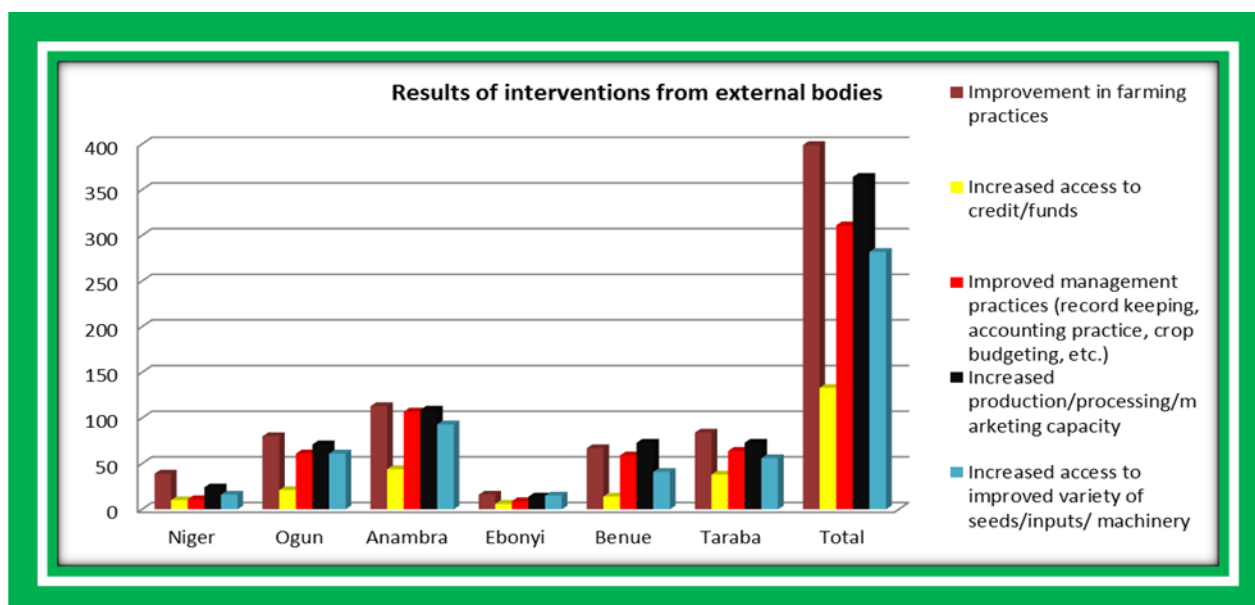


Figure 39: Changes resulting from external interventions for groups by states

3.19. Groups' Involvement in Advocacy

A final component of external interactions of groups is the extent to which groups have interacted with their local or state governments to influence policies that relate to their well-being or growth of their sector. Groups were asked if they had ever influenced any type of government policy since the creation of their groups or cooperative societies. The responses received as shown in the table indicates that the subject of advocacy is not a major undertaking by groups. Only 194 out of 1,172 groups (about 17%) claimed to have influenced some level of government action or policy for their benefit. Some the specific influences claimed include infrastructure related development like construction of boreholes or wells for the benefit of their community. Some also claimed that they have influenced the relaxing of multiple taxes on their activities. But largely, every other claim did not specify the type of influence they have been able to achieve. The chart below shows that the same pattern exists across the states.

Since majority of the groups do not attempt to advocate on specific issues relating to their development, any intervention strategy that will enable groups' leadership to engage with local authorities and government agencies to deliver services that will enhance their livelihoods would go a long way to making the cooperative groups exert more influence for the benefit of their members and the community at large using the power of joint action instead of acting on individual basis.

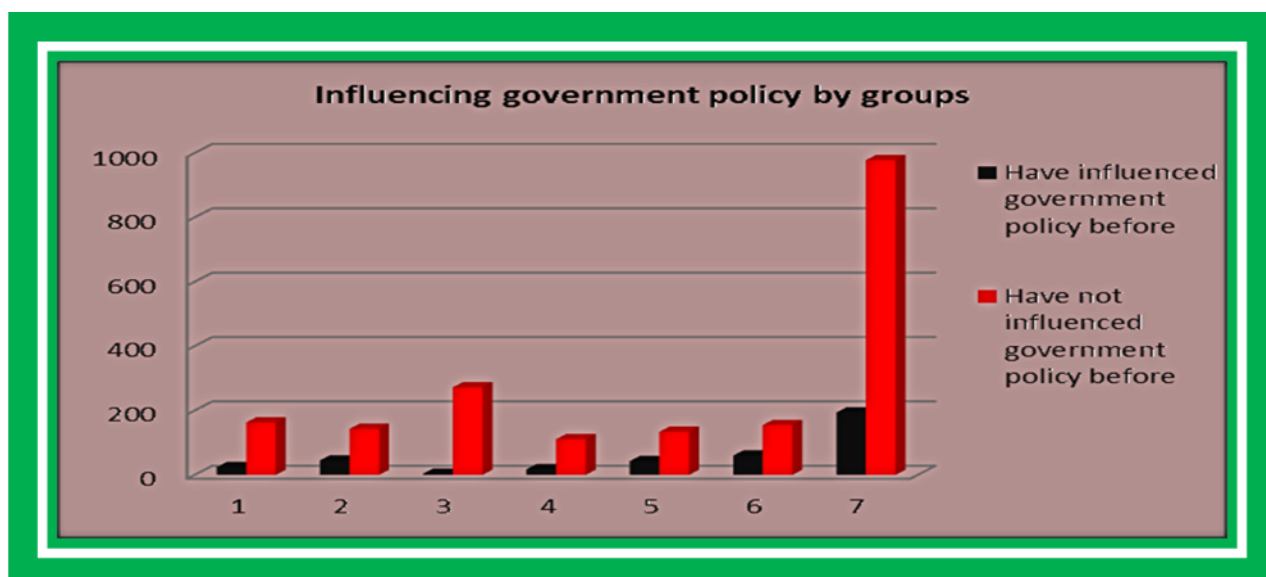


Figure 40: Distribution of groups influencing government policy or action

3.20. Productivity of Groups:

One of the major elements of this study is to relate groups' maturity with their current productivity levels. However, there are various elements of productivity which the time frame for delivering this study did not allow to be included. Attempts at querying the level of production of the various groups within the two value chains resulted in responses that need to be verified for the accuracy. This is especially so because the VCDP envisages to work with farmers who farm on 5 hectares or less or processors with capacity of 2 tonnes/day for cassava or 4 tonnes/day for rice. This critical element would actually mean that fields claimed to be owned by groups and their members would need to be measured. The responses from some respondents for instance would automatically disqualify them from participating in the VCDP. But the reality that these are small scale farmers speaks differently. It is under these circumstances that a fair amount of work was done to harmonize disparate answers with known references using the ADPs block supervisors in order to gain better insight into responses from the groups without prejudice to their accuracy or otherwise.

For productivity related components, the average land holding for members of the cooperatives, their total production of rice and cassava in the last farming season, the proportion of the commodity processed before sales and the income generated from the sales of their crops in the last farming season were considered. All these were used to understand how groups are distributed and their economic standing were reviewed. The table below gives a summary of responses received within the various categories created during the field data collection for ease of classification. It clearly shows that while a majority of the producing

groups fall within the VCDP design for group's selection, a tangible number of the groups does not qualify as their responses indicate that members currently cultivate more than 5hectatres of land for either rice or cassava.

Table 13: Groups Productivity

	Niger	Ogun	Anambra	Ebonyi	Benue	Taraba	Total
Average land holding:							
Below 1 ha	91	5	0	2	18	0	116
between 1 and 5 ha	84	131	212	53	103	77	660
Above 5 ha	24	41	86	76	34	126	387
Total valid responses	199	177	298	131	155	203	1163
Total Production of cassava							
Below 50 tonnes	59	83	66	38	60	56	362
50-100 tonnes	18	24	63	6	0	15	126
Above 100 tonnes	12	39	50	8	0	4	113
Total valid responses	89	146	179	52	60	75	601
Total Production of rice							
Below 10 tonnes	31	16	41	10	41	61	200
10-30 tonnes	39	7	62	30	16	19	173
Above 30 tonnes	19	3	74	10	5	13	124
Total valid responses	89	26	177	50	62	93	497
Proportion of goods processed							
Below 20%	98	30	62	10	0	12	212
20-50%	21	10	73	25	2	0	131
Above 50%	59	78	53	46	10	2	248
Total valid responses	178	118	188	81	12	14	591
Average Income							
Below 100,000	44	14	23	7	53	36	177
100000 -500000	117	54	165	65	66	65	532
Above 500000	31	55	72	57	20	36	271
Total valid responses	192	123	243	129	139	137	963

On average land holding by group members, while 116 groups have members with less than 1 hectare, 660 groups have members with land holding of between 1ha and 5ha. But a whopping

387 groups fall outside the VCDP range of 5ha. For emphasis, there is serious need to investigate the claims by these groups.

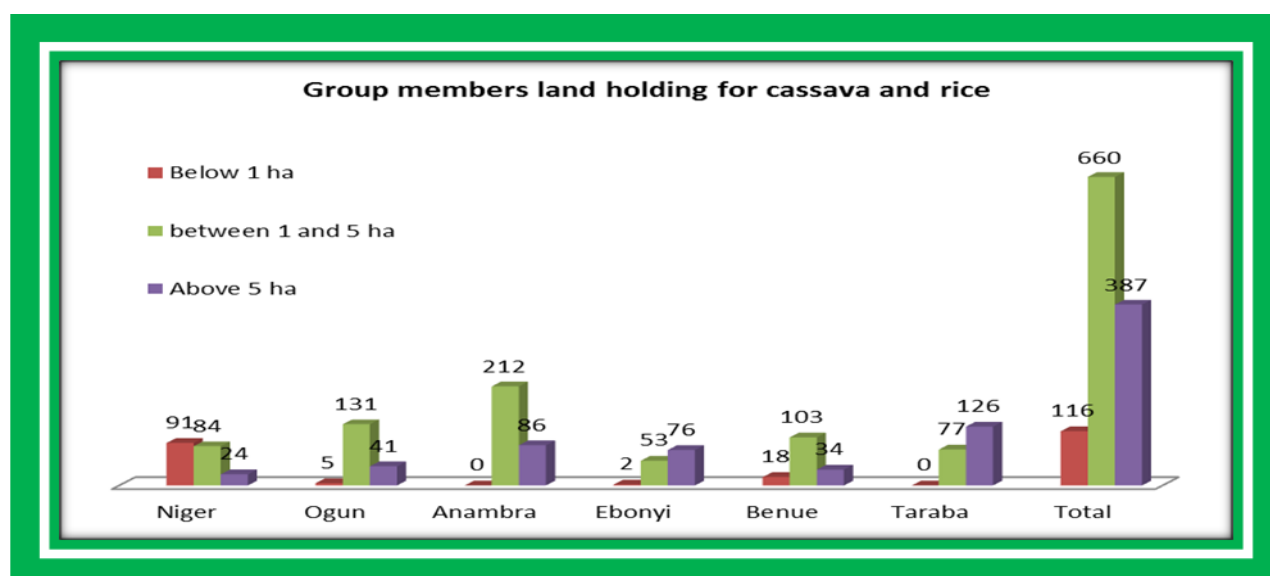


Figure 41: Distribution of groups according to land holding

This trend is most noticeable in Taraba state where 126 groups have average land holding of above 5Ha. This is followed by Anambra with 86 groups outside the range. Ebonyi too has a significant number of 76 groups whose members land holding for cassava and or rice exceeds 5hectares. The situation becomes more worrisome when an attempt is made to reconcile land holding for cassava and or rice with total production. No correlation is seen especially in relation to number of people in a group using current average yield for each crop. This is however beyond the scope of this study.

3.20.1. Cassava Production:

For total production of cassava reported by groups interviewed, 60% reported to have produced less than 50tons in the last farming season. This means that a maximum of 4 hectares was cultivated by these groups as a cooperative when a yield of 12-13tons/hectare is considered. Individual members' production was not considered. Therefore valid responses only refer to productions

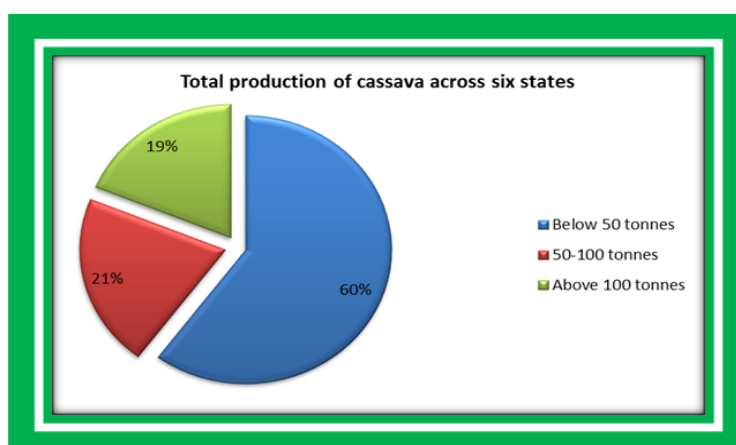


Figure 42: Distribution of groups according to level of cassava production

from cooperative farms. 21% of the groups' responses indicated that their total production was between 50 and 100 tons while 19% produced above 100 tons of cassava. The yield for cassava may differ from location to location but a distribution of the level of cassava production by states reveals that the same pattern is seen across the states. Anambra state alone has almost equal proportions of production levels by groups from that state. Others have their majority producing below 50 tonnes in the last farming season.

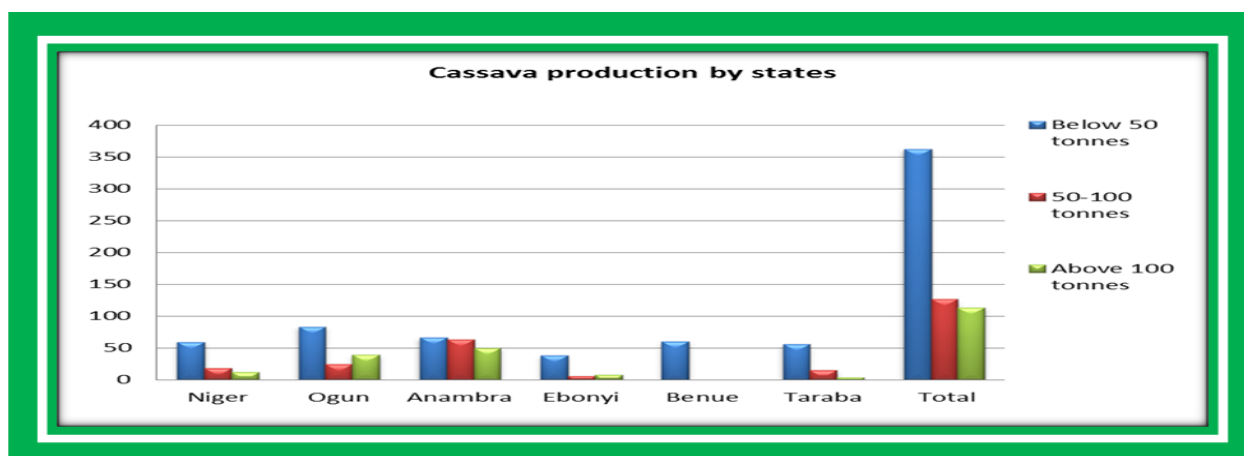


Figure 43: Distribution of groups according to level of cassava production by states

3.20.2. Rice Production:

For rice production, cooperatives farms in the six states showed that their level of production follows a similar pattern as that of cassava with most groups (40%) producing less than 10 tons in the last season while 35% produced between 10 and 30 tons. A significant 25% produced above 30 tonnes in the last season which indicates that the land cultivated as cooperative groups was above 5 hectares at current yield of between 2 and 4 tonnes per hectare. A look at the states' contribution to this overall figures shows that Anambra state drives the high number of groups with rice production of above 30 tonnes while Niger and Ebonyi states have a higher mid-level production of 10-30 tonnes. Ogun, Benue and Taraba have most of their groups in the low production level of less than 10 tonnes in the last planting season.

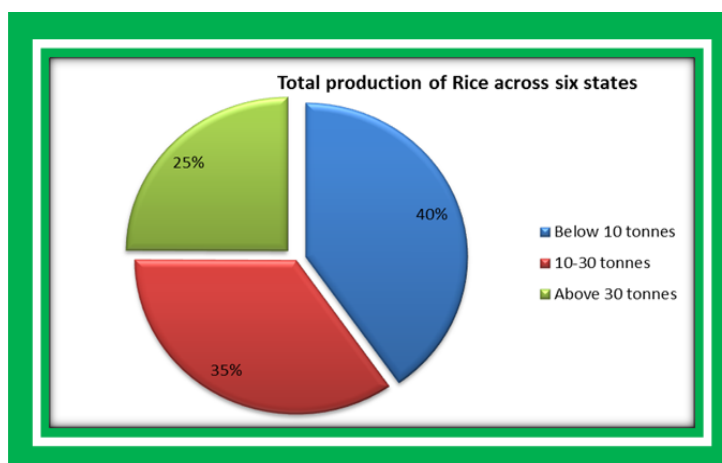


Figure 44: Distribution of groups according to level of rice production

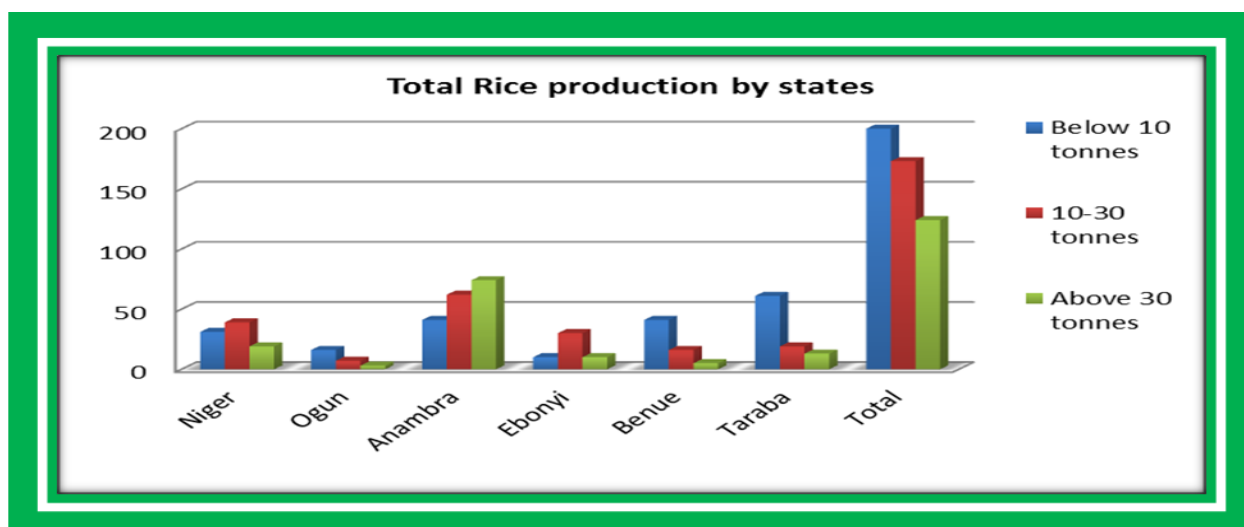


Figure 45: Distribution of groups according to level of rice production by states

3.21. Processing and Value Addition by Groups:

Attempt was made to determine the proportion of the total production which groups process before sale. The responses received are also shown in the table above. The categories established were based on the range of answers received and calculating the proportion as a percentage of the total production of the two commodities aggregated. The responses received clearly shows that majority of the groups process above 50% of their total production. This is significant in that farm gate sale of commodities is not as prevailing as envisaged. However, a major proportion of the groups interviewed still process less than 20% of their production which tells a lot about the need for value addition to commodities to be promoted in order to maximize the earnings of the producers. About 22% of the groups are processing between 20% and 50% of their products before sale. It shows that there is room for improving these figures with strategic intervention such as the VCDP.

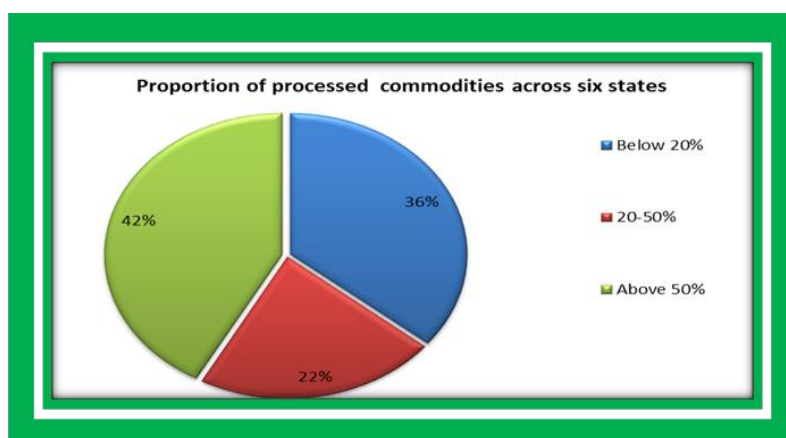


Figure 46: Distribution of groups according to proportion of processing of commodities before sales

When the proportion of processed commodities is viewed through the states, Niger state drive the low processing groups where majority of the groups interviewed process less than 20% of

their produce before sale out the total number of valid responses received. Ogun and Ebonyi on the other hand drive the high proportion of processing of above 50% with their majorities in that category. Anambra maintains an almost equal proportion across all the categories.

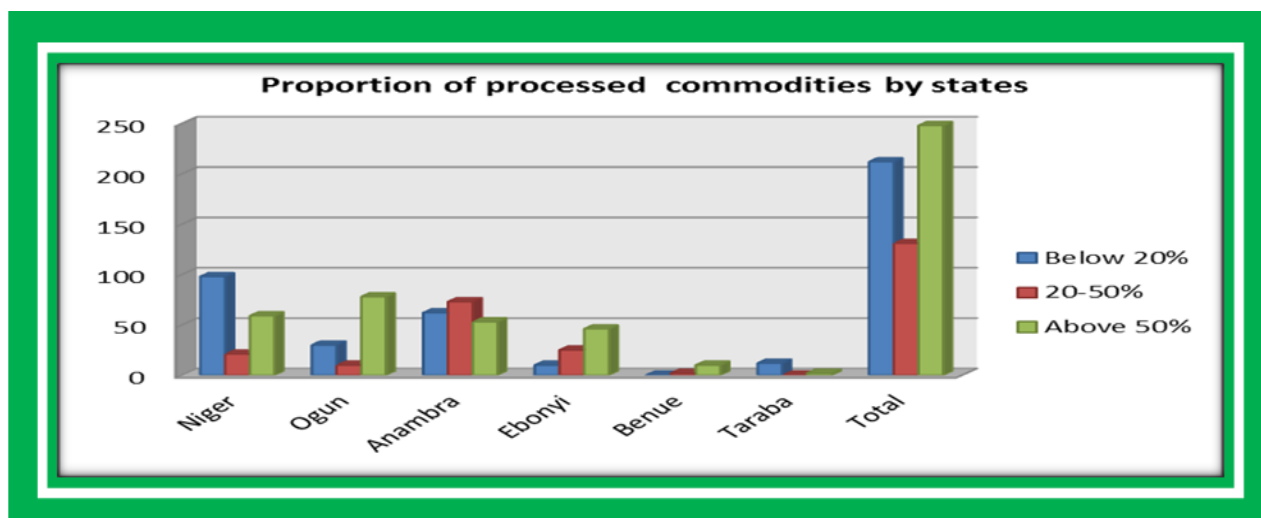


Figure 47: Distribution of groups according to proportion of processing of commodities by states

Niger and Taraba states would probably require a little more attention for groups to develop their processing capacities in order to earn more value from the production.

3.22. Income Generation in the Value Chains:

A significant aspect of the economic characteristics of stakeholders in the rice and cassava value chain is the income level of the players through their ventures in the value chains. To get an insight into the current income levels of members of the groups from activities in the value chain whether in production, processing or marketing, groups were asked to give estimates of the members' earnings in the commodities in question using the respondent's experience as a case for the group members.

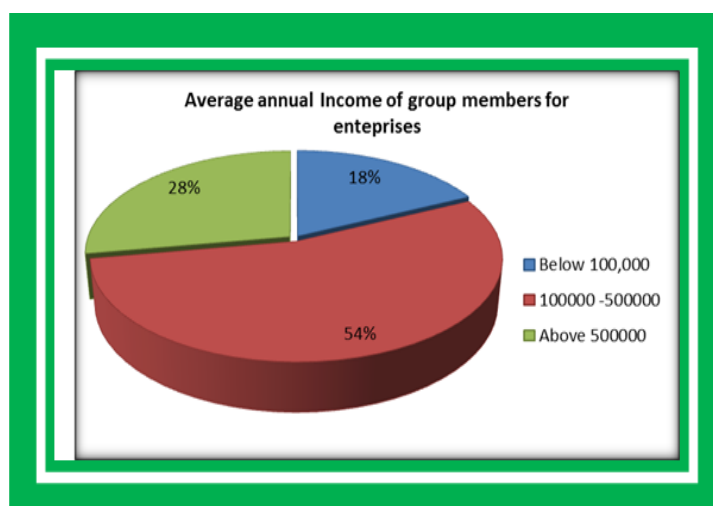


Figure 48: Distribution of groups according to average annual income of members

The table above shows that when aggregated for the six states, the majority of respondents (54%) earn between N100, 000:00 to N500, 000:00. A significant proportion earn above N500, 000:00 per annum from activities in the value chain. While these figures are quite high, there was no means of verifying the claims. Only 18% of the total number of groups earns less than N100, 000.00 per annum from their enterprises in the value chains.

The observed pattern of earnings is only showing total revenues without expenses. These earnings are not an indication of profits, but an estimate of total turnover. It must also be noted that the level of validity of the estimates may be biased against some members of the groups who may earn less than these as the executive member of the groups interviewed are usually the highest earners in the groups. So these claims may not be a true picture across board in the groups. For the purpose of determining a baseline for these groups, a random selection of other members of the groups may be needed. This study could not carryout this type of random interviews of non-executive members of groups.

It would have been interesting to compare the level of earnings differentiated by groups in the two commodities to see if any pattern exists. But the limitation of time and resources does not permit that level of analysis at this stage.

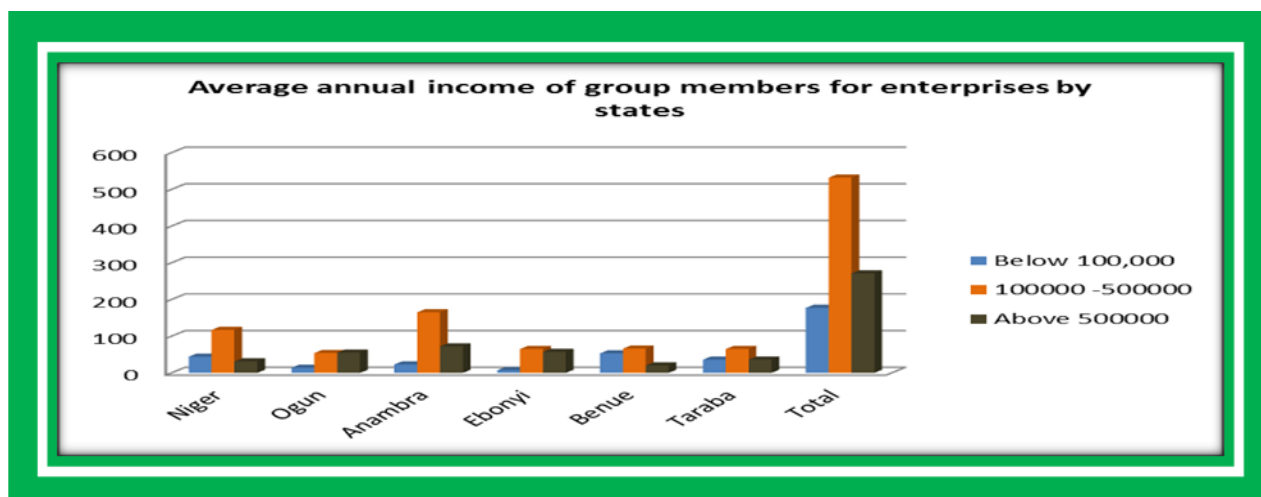


Figure 49: Distribution of groups according to average annual income of members by states

Across the six states, the same pattern exists. More group members earn above N100, 000:00 for their activities in the value chain than groups with members who earn less. This is again a subject that requires verification which may not be easy to carry out as it has to do with looking into the books of individual entrepreneurs within the groups enumerated. However, if the responses are anything to go by, the average earnings per annum is significant enough to lift people out of poverty and raise the standard of living of the rural poor households.

3.23. Processing and Marketing Groups:

While attempts were made to obtain relevant information from groups that were formed on the basis of processing and marketing of the two commodities, it was observed that information given by respondents are not valid for any meaningful analysis. Most of the answers received could not correlate with the type of data required. In all, a total of 84 groups out of 1,298 (about 6%) were found to be organized around processing activities across the six states. Their processing capacity could not be ascertained due to answers from the groups which was detailing the 'horse power' capacity of their machines instead of quantities of commodities processed. Time constraints could not allow for a repeat enumeration as these deficiencies could have been eliminated if a pilot survey was conducted and instruments adapted to field realities.

However, on owning storage facilities, most of the groups interviewed affirmed that they had storage facilities but the capacity of the storage facilities could also not be ascertained as measurements given by the respondents could not be correlated with actual quantities of commodities stored. Most responses gave their capacity in terms of land space which did not give any meaningful insight into the volume of commodities processed it can keep.

Concerning expansion of the current processing facilities, all the groups organized around processing claimed that they have not expanded their facilities and that funds for such expansion is not available. It will be necessary to conduct a detailed survey of processing facilities as part of the VCDP implementation whether they are owned by groups or by individuals to give the true picture of processing activities within the value chains instead of focusing only on groups.

In terms of marketing, it can be said that almost all production activities end up in the market. While only a few groups (9 groups out of 1,298) are mobilized strictly around marketing of commodities and their derivatives, almost all the groups enumerated are involved in the marketing of their products at various levels. Of the nine groups organized around marketing, 8 of them are found in Benue state and only one was found in Niger state. The Benue state groups are mainly female dominated groups based in the local markets where they aggregate commodities that have been processed for onward sales in distant markets. They are mainly Garri and Milled rice sellers' union which are operating like cooperatives. Most of them also buy unprocessed commodities and process them by themselves thereby adding value before aggregating and selling.

The major concern though with the formation of marketing cooperatives is that they mainly function sometimes as cartels and all its attendant price manipulations. It is therefore not

surprising when only a few of them actually exist in the six states. It is yet to be seen if the few marketing cooperatives have enhanced the growth of the sectors by providing ready market for commodities at prices that is beneficial to the producers which in turn encourages them to grow more.

PART 4

4. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of Producing Groups in Six States of Nigeria

Judging from observations and findings on the field, a SWOT framework for the Farmers' Organizations in the six states of the VCDP provides a summary of issues that can catalyzed to work for the development of the value chains within the current VCDP design.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Very participatory with democratic structures for electing leadership2. Multiple sources of funding available3. Depends more in internally generated revenues4. Women are strongly represented in decision making of groups5. Very high frequency of meetings for proper dissemination of ideas and information6. Most members are in their productive years7. Encourage good neighborliness and promote social harmony and group solidarity among members8. Help members pull resources together in pursuit common economic interest9. Fair attempt has been made at record keeping10. A good percentage have links with external apex groups11. Encouraging output levels from small land holdings12. Income from value chain activities are reasonable	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Most groups were only formed recently with not much experience in group activities and dynamics2. Not mature enough to employ their own staff3. Too few homogenous youth groups4. Not effective in awareness creation and effective marketing of products5. Inadequate capacity for group bargaining or bulk purchase to lower costs of inputs6. No good practice of small-scale business management7. Too much mental documentation which is subject to being forgotten8. Too isolated from policy processes and broad agricultural intervention programmes9. Notable disconnect with other existing local groups10. Too few groups organized around processing and marketing commodities11. Groups are hardly monitored to determine conformity or otherwise to stated objectives

13. A good proportion of groups are processing more than 50% of products before sale		
Opportunities		Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can benefit especially from capacity-building and training in order to enhance their group management skills and record-keeping 2. More homogenous women groups can help to increase women participation 3. Demonstration projects can facilitate quick assimilation of new farming and processing techniques 4. Youth participation incentives can increase youths interest in value chains 5. Increased income from value chain activities can enhance the participation of the youths 6. Introduction of high yielding varieties could increase yields and incomes 7. Could benefit from increased access to inputs and processing facilities 8. Increased capacity of monitoring and regulatory agencies would fast track groups' progress to maturity. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Not much willingness to learn or accept training as interventions or assistance 3. Discouraging group income could prevent good initiatives that would benefit members 4. Fictitious claims in order to benefit from any external opportunity without real work in the value chains 5. Too much dependence on few people for ideas and initiatives 6. Proliferation of groups doing the same things even when sector is saturated 7. Inadequate capacity to retain skilled workforce may not allow access to good service 8. Loyalty to programmes that facilitated their formation may not make them submit to scrutiny

PART 5

5. Conclusion and Recommendations for Intervention Considerations

From the SWOT framework laid out in the preceding section, it is obvious that opportunities exist for the development of existing groups in order to maximize their potential to enhance the earnings of their members and develop the value chains under discourse. Several strategies could be adopted; but based on the findings on the field and the responses of the groups to their current need, this study recommends the following:

5.1. Empower ADPS to Provide Platform for Interaction with Groups:

In order to maximize their strengths, existing groups in the states should be made to form solid partnership with the respective ADPs particularly with the Rural Institutional Development (RID) units. This partnership will allow the ADPS work with the existing groups irrespective of the programmes that facilitated their formation. The department of cooperatives in the states should also partner with the RID units of the ADPS to facilitate monitoring the activities of the cooperatives. This recommendation is mainly as a result of the gross disconnect that currently exist between regulatory agencies in the states or local governments and the cooperative groups. Mostly, after registration of the cooperatives and the issuing of certificates, the interaction between the cooperatives and their regulators scarcely moves further. Since the ADPS will be the main government institutions responsible for coordinating the VCDP in the states, mobilization and monitoring of groups should form an essential component of their activities in the VCDP. The platform to be facilitated for interaction through the RID units of the ADPS will enhance and reinforce group dynamics, cohesion, business orientation and literacy levels of existing cooperative societies by creating the necessary channels for all programme designs.

5.2. Enhance Networking with External Groups:

While it has been noted from the field data that most groups do not collaborate with other groups, a strategy to encourage interaction with other networks and groups should be considered. Regular dissemination of broad network programmes should form a critical component of involving rural groups in broad agricultural activities. Existing apex bodies which have links in the states should be partnered to involve local groups in their programming in order to give exposure of the groups to current techniques and technologies as well as policy discourse that affects the development of their livelihoods. Apex groups who have demonstrated adequate capacity in mobilizing groups from the grassroots will be valuable in this programme design.

5.3. Capacity Building for Agencies and Groups:

The results from the survey also show that there is a lot of work to be done to enable the various groups to become self-sustaining. Basic small business management skills are still lacking, record keeping is still very low and financial access is grossly inadequate. However, there is need to conduct a specific needs

assessment of groups and agencies responsible for the regulation and monitoring of these groups in order to determine what is currently required to make them more functional in the monitoring and regulation of groups within the value chains as well as determine the curriculum that will benefit the groups more effectively. This calls for a design of training modules that will cater for these issues among selected groups. The platform created for interaction through the RID units of the ADPS will enable specific needs assessments to be conducted for the various states to adequately address the current gaps. This will leverage on the work done by the various programmes in the state.

5.4. Mobilizing Women Based Groups:

As a result of the very low homogenous female groups, one strategy is to encourage the formation of solely women groups in the value chains to increase their participation and give visibility to their roles in the value chains. While a high percentage of the current mixed groups have women in leadership, it would be necessary to know what extent their voices are heard in the running of the groups. Since a few women based groups exist in the states, promoting more of them will go a long way to increase their roles and earnings from activities in the value chains.

5.5. Mobilizing Youth Groups:

A very low proportion of youth groups involved in the value chains calls for a strategy to mobilize the participation of the younger folks in the sector. This can be achieved by evolving promotional programmes that will exhibit the benefits and earnings that can be generated from involvement in various aspects of the value chains. School leavers' agriculture programmes and public discussion forums for youths will enlighten them on the benefits of youth involvement in agriculture.

5.6. Increase Access to Credits and Inputs:

Most of the groups have stated that access to adequate funds as at when due will go a long way to helping them realize their objectives by helping members increase productivity and leveraging available market. But access to funds is grossly inadequate and at best haphazard. Using strategic designs by the VCDP to increase access of farmers to inputs and credits through the agency of organized groups will tremendously increase productivity and earnings. There are success stories from on-going projects all over the country.

5.7. Mobilizing Inputs and Improved Varieties through Organized Groups

When through the VCDP, improved variety of seeds and other inputs are mobilized by implementing partners; the groups should be involved strategically for intended beneficiaries to begin to trust in the groups' relevance to their economic benefits. This will empower the groups to get better loyalty from members and the public. When the groups are by-passed through the influence of personalities, little trust and loyalty is placed on the group formation as a way of receiving the necessary support for their development. Therefore, the VCDP should consider revolving most interventions around organized groups to allow for intended beneficiaries to receive the needed support.

5.8. Supply Aggregation Strategy

Capacity building for supply aggregation in the rural areas in order to increase connection and reliability with large scale processors is a major factor to increasing the marketing of their products. Since groups are usually made up of individual small holder producers, the ability of the formed groups to stimulate aggregation of their commodities so that they fit into the supply chain of large processors will be a service provision that is critical in the value chains under discourse. While the groups have given this service as one of the services they provide, there is little on the ground to show that aggregating their supply of commodities with a target large processor as a group is currently functional; hence the need to build this specific capacity for the various groups.

5.9. General

Awareness campaign on the benefit of cooperatives is paramount especially for farmers who are not committed to being organized because of fear of taxation and no previous benefit from government. Building the capacity of group leaders on mobilization strategies will enhance the mobilization of more members. There is need to incentivize the farming business by providing **prizes/awards** for farmers and farmers groups that meet set goals either related to production or as related to conformity to certain good practices. An example has been piloted by OXFAM. Further interaction with OXFAM can generate lessons and potentials for such incentives in reinforcing group dynamics and functionality.

Direct interventions and funding through effective framework and structures like the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and NGOs which have exhibited capacity to mobilize and manage groups in the past should be considered a strategic framework for engaging farmer groups in the future alongside the government agencies who are usually the preferred partners. These organizations have the capacity and means to reach rural farmers in sustainable ways while ensuring that interactions with farmers groups are set within objective assessment of their constraints. It will be necessary therefore to create a stronger platform for CSOs and NGOs to engage in the VCDP implementation especially on farmers' group interventions.

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