

## **TRAINING NEEDS OF RURAL FISHERFOLKS: A CASE STUDY OF ITU AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study ascertained the training needs of rural fisherfolks in Itu Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Data, obtained using multi-stage sampling procedure, were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results revealed that fisherfolks in the study area can be categorized into the following four classes based on their activities: fishers, boat and gears owners, fish sellers/vendors and helpers. The most desired training need for fisherfolks in the fishers category is training on improved fish catching methods using modern fishing gears and the most desired training need for fisherfolks in the boat and gears owners' category is training on machineries/equipment maintenance; training on fish preservation methods and training on proper fish handling were the most desired training needs of fisherfolks in the fish sellers/vendors category and helpers category respectively. It is recommended that training interventions/programmes targeted at rural fisherfolks by Governmental and Non-Governmental agencies in Akwa Ibom State take cognizance of the identified key training areas in the study to ensure the success of such efforts.*

**KEYWORDS:** Needs, Rural, Fisherfolks, Akwa Ibom

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Fish plays a vital role in feeding the world's population and contributing significantly to the dietary protein intake of billions of the populace (Amao *et al*, 2006). It is an importance source of protein which is highly needed for human beings to experience necessary growth and development (Oparinde and Sylvester, 2014). Fish is very important in the diet of many Nigerians, high in nutritional value with complete array of amino acids, vitamins and minerals (Akinrotimi *et al*, 2007); it provides more than 60% of the total protein intakes in adults especially in the rural areas of Nigeria (Adekoya and Miller, 2004). Fish products are relatively cheaper compared to beef, pork and other animal protein sources in the country (Amao, *et al*, 2006). In Africa, the fish sector provides income for over 10 million people engaged in fish production, processing and trade (New Partnership for African Development, 2005). Fish has become a leading export commodity for Africa with an annual value of 2.7 billion US Dollars (Olaoye *et al*, 2013).

Nevertheless, supply of fish has been on the decline in Nigeria (Ugwumba and Chukwuji, 2010), and small scale artisanal fishery sub-sector is the backbone of fish production in the country (Abbot and Makeham, 1990). In order for small scale fisherfolks - such as the ones that constitute majority of fisherfolks in Akwa Ibom State - to improve their level of fish catch, they need to be trained (Todor, 1991). The identification of the training needs of the fisherfolks and suitable training deliveries are the most sought after interventions to reverse this negative trend of decline in level of fish production (Belwal and Belwal, 2014).

Conducting training needs assessment is fundamental to the success of a training program (Brown, 2002).

Cedaka (2010) defined training needs assessment as an ongoing process of gathering data to determine training needs to help the organization accomplish its objectives. Training plays an important role in the advancement of human performance in a given situation (Sajeev *et al*, 2012). Training provides a systematic improvement of knowledge and skills which in turn helps the trainees to function effectively and efficiently in their given task on completion of the training. Training is an important tool of extension which helps in improving the knowledge, skills as well as changing the attitude of an incumbent with respect to doing a specified job properly (Sanni *et al*, 2009); it is an important element of agricultural development (Madley, 1995). Training needs identification is possible through different analytical procedures (Caffarella, 2002). The possible methods or techniques for individual analysis include performance appraisal, interviews, questionnaires, tests, analysis of behavior, informal talks, checklist, counseling, critical incidents, recording, surveys and observations. This study adopted the use of questionnaires to assess the training needs of fisherfolks in Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The fishing communities in Itu Local Government Area are predominantly rural areas (Asa *et al*, 2012). The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i, Examine the socio-economic characteristics of fisherfolks in Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State,
- ii, Ascertain the categories of fisherfolks in the study area, and
- iii, Assess the areas of training needs of the respondents based on the different categories of the fisherfolks.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The Local Government Area lies between 6°40" and 6°20" North latitudes and 9°30" and 5°47" East longitudes; occupies a total area of 606.10km<sup>2</sup>; and has a total population of 127,856 (National Population Commission, 2006). Itu Local Government Area is characterized by two major seasons – the rainy season (April to October) and the dry season (November to March). A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents for the study. The first stage involved the purposive selection of all the fishing communities in Itu Local Government Area which comprised of 25 villages. This was to ensure that only fisherfolks constitute the sample frame of the study. The second stage involved the simple random selection of four villages (Oku Iboku, Esuk Itu, Ayadehe and Obot Etim) out of the twenty five villages that constitute the fishing communities. The last stage involved the simple random selection of 30 respondents from each of the selected villages thereby resulting in a total sample size of 120. The training needs of fisherfolks were ascertained using survey methods- interviews and questionnaires (Brown, 2002 and Caffarella, 2002). A list of training needs, from literature and interviews of fisherfolks and extension agents of Akwa Ibom State Agricultural Development Program (AKADEP) based on the identified categories of fisherfolks, were presented to the respondents to state whether each is a need or otherwise.

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and ranks were used to analyze the primary data collected for the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Socio-economic characteristics of fisherfolks in Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria:** The socio-economic characteristics of fisherfolks in Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria are shown in Table 1. The Table reveals that 57.5% of the fisherfolks were males while 42.5% were females. This suggests that majority of the fisherfolks in the study area were males thereby corroborating Ekpeyong (2012) who reported that males constitute most of the fisherfolks in Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The average age of the respondents was 42 years. Table 1 also reveals that 60.9% of the respondents had formal education. The finding agrees with Asa and Ebong (2014) who reported that majority of fisherfolks in Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State are functionally literate. Over seventy seven percent (77.5%) of the respondents are married. Asa and Solomon (2010) stated that majority of rural dwellers in Akwa Ibom State actively engaged in income generating activities such as farming and fishing are married. The average household size of the respondents comprised of five persons as depicted in Table 1. Asa and Ebong (2014) also reported that the average household size of fisherfolks in Itu Local Government Area is made up of five persons. Okoro (2004) opined that majority of rural dwellers in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria have relatively low household sizes. Majority of the respondents (80.8%) earned less than ₦20,000.00 per month while only 2.5% of them earned between ₦40,0001 – ₦60,000 monthly; the average monthly income of the respondents is ₦14,333.83 which is relatively low. The average years of the respondents' involvement in fishing activities is ten years as shown in Table 1. The finding agrees with Asa *et al.*, (2012) who reported that the average years of fishing experience of fisherfolks in Itu Local Government Area is less than 20 years.

**Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of fisherfolks in Itu Area of Akwa Ibom State**

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Sex	Male	69	57.5	
	Female	51	42.5	
Age	21 – 40 years	59	49.2	42
	41 – 60 years	55	45.8	
	61 – 80 years	6	5.0	
Educational status	No formal education	47	39.1	
	Primary education	32	26.7	
	Secondary education	32	26.7	
	Tertiary education	9	7.5	
Marital status	Single	27	22.5	
	Married	93	77.5	
Household size	1 -4 person(s)	42	35.0	5
	5 – 8 persons	70	58.3	
	9 – 12 persons	7	5.8	
	13 – 16 persons	1	0.8	
Monthly	₦1 – ₦20,000	97	80.8	

income	₦14,333.83				
	₦20,001 - ₦40,000	20		16.7	
	₦40,001 - ₦60,000	3		2.5	
Years of	1 – 10	79		65.8	10
fishing	11 – 20		33	27.5	
	21 – 30		8	6.7	

Note: 1 US Dollar equals to 198.98 Nigerian Naira (₦) as at February 12, 2016

Source: Field survey data, 2012

**Categories of fisherfolks in Itu Area of Akwa Ibom State:** Table 2 shows the categories of fisherfolks in Itu Area of Akwa Ibom State based on fishing activities the respondents are predominantly engaged in. The fisherfolks in Itu Area are often engaged in more than one of the categories at any given time (Asa *et al*, 2012). The Table reveals that 33.7% of the respondents belong to the fishers category, 31.6% were in the fish sellers/vendors category, 17.6% were in the boat and gear owners category while 17.1% were in the helpers category. The major activity of fisherfolks in the fishers category is fish catching; the boat and gear owners category constitute fisherfolks who hire out their boats and fishing gears to the fishers; the sellers/vendors are primarily involved in selling the caught fish while the helpers are involved in processing of the fish by removing the scales of the caught fish, salting, drying, curing, and generally getting the fish ready for sales by the fish sellers/vendors. These four categories of fisherfolks are in concordance with Pomeroy and Rivera-Gurie (2005) who also stated the existence of the same four categories/classes of fisherfolks.

**Table 2: Distribution of the respondents based on categories of fisherfolks in Itu Area of Akwa Ibom State**

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Fishers category	65	33.7
Boat and gear owners category	34	17.6
Fish sellers/vendors category	61	31.6
Helpers category	33	17.1
Total	193*	100

Note: \* = multiple responses

Source: Field survey data, 2012

**Areas of training needs of the respondents based on the different categories of fisherfolks in Itu Area:** The areas of training needs of the respondents based on the four identified categories of fisherfolks in Itu Area are shown in Table 3. For the fishers category, the major areas which the respondents stated that they need be trained were: training on improved fish catching methods using modern fishing gears and training on safety measures. Cullenberry (2000) reported that due to weather conditions at sea and other water bodies, people in this environment need to be trained on survival measures/safety strategies. However, the areas of least training needs for fisherfolks in the fishers category were: training/enlightenment campaigns on acceptable methods of fishing which do not damage the environment and training on proper launching/landing of boats.

Data from Table 3 also reveal that the major areas of training needs for fisherfolks in the boat and gear owners' category were: training on machineries/equipment maintenance and repairs and training on legal contract-based leasing methods. This could be as a result of the desire to ensure sustainability of the business and increase profit making. Training on effective accessing of machineries/equipment manufacturers and training on net mending were minor training needs for fisherfolks in the boat and gear owners' category.

For fisherfolks in the fish sellers/vendors category, major areas of training needs were: training on fish preservation methods and training on proper fish transportation methods while training on formation/membership of co-operative societies was not their major training need (see Table 4). Data in Table 4 also show that major areas of training needs for fisherfolks in the fish helpers' category were: training on proper fish handling, training on fish processing techniques and training on maintenance of health/safe environment. The finding agrees with Asa *et al* (2008) who reported that fish preservation and processing techniques were major areas of training needs of fisherfolks in Eket and Ibeno Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. However, training on proper disposal of fish waste was only a minor area of training need for them.

**Table 3: Areas of training needs of fisherfolks (fishers and boat and gears owner categories) in Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State**

Areas of training needs	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Fishers category (n = 65)</i>		
1. Training on improved fish catching methods using modern fishing gears	50	18.2
2. Training on water surveying	33	12.0
3. Training on operating the different types of fishing gear	42	15.3
4. Training on reading/interpretation of machineries' signs and symbols	39	14.2
5. Training on safety measures	46	16.8
6. Training/enlightenment campaign on acceptable methods of fishing which do not damage the environment	32	11.7
7. Training on proper launching of boats/landing methods	32	11.7
Total	274*	100
<i>Boat and gears owners category (n = 34)</i>		
1. Training on effective accessing of machineries/equipment manufacturers	18	15.5
2. Training on machineries/equipment maintenance and repairs	29	25.0
3. Training on net mending	18	15.5
4. Training on hook and line construction/repairs	21	18.1
5. Training on legal contract-based leasing methods	28	24.1
6. Training on machineries/equipment safety measures	2	1.7
Total	116*	100

Note: \* = multiple responses

Source: Field survey data, 2012

**Table 4: Areas of training needs of fisherfolks (fish sellers/vendors and helpers categories) in Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State**

Areas of training needs	Frequency	Percentag
<i>Fish sellers/vendors category (n = 61)</i>		
1. Training on market surveying	37	12.2
2. Training on branding of fish and fish products	40	13.2
3. Training on proper fish transportation methods	43	14.1
4. Training on the use of improved storage facilities	41	13.5
5. Training on records keeping	40	13.2
6. Training on fish preservation methods	48	15.8
7. Training on proper fish handling	29	9.5
8. Training on formation/membership of co-operative societies	26	8.6
Total	304*	100
<i>Fish helpers category (n = 33)</i>		
1. Training on proper fish handling	30	27.0
2. Training on fish processing techniques	28	25.2
3. Training on maintenance of healthy/safe environment	28	25.2
4. Training on proper disposal of fish waste	25	22.5
Total	111	100

Note: \* = multiple responses

Source: Field survey data, 2012

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study revealed that training on improved fish catching methods using modern fishing gears, training on machineries/equipment maintenance, training on fish preservation methods and training on proper fish handling were the most desired training needs of fisherfolks in the fishers category, boat and gears owners category, fish sellers/vendors category and helpers category, respectively, in Itu Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the training interventions/programmes of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria as well as other developmental agencies in the State targeted at fisherfolks in the rural areas of the State take cognizance of the identified key training areas in the study to ensure the success of such interventions/programmes.

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