



UDC: 37.014.2-055.2(669.1-22)

AN ASSESSMENT OF LITERACY NEEDS OF RURAL WOMEN IN AKOKO SOUTH WEST AREA OF ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Received: 2016-07-01

Accepted: 2016-07-20

Published online: 2016-08-31

Abstract

The study assessed the literacy needs of rural women in Akoko South West area of Ondo State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select six out of the nine towns in the local government. A total of 250 women respondents constituted the population. The self-designed research instrument used to gather the data was adjudged adequate and valid by specialists in Women Studies. The data collected was analysed with both descriptive and inferential statistics. The result of the study revealed that majority of the respondents are aged between 30 and 39 (40.4%); majority of them (48.4%) had SSCE as their highest educational qualification. Their occupation was majorly farming (52.5%) and a total of 70% of them were married. Also, it was revealed that agricultural literacy is needed to a very large extent by the respondents ($X^2=72.992$, $df=2$, $p < 0.05$). It was equally revealed that the respondents needed information literacy to a very large extent ($X^2 = 72.728$, $df=2$, $p < 0.05$). On the basis of these findings it was recommended among others that government should ensure that rural women have access to loans, fertilizers and other agricultural inputs that can increase their farm produce. Also, government should create awareness of information literacy and enhance information sources so that rural women can have access to information in every aspect of their endeavours.

Keywords: assessment, literacy needs, rural women.



Introduction

The term literacy is perceived and used differently by different educationists, organizations, and interest groups who engage in literacy surveys for purposes of planning and assessing the impact of social and economic development of the population of a given nation. Thus, a water-tight definition of the term can hardly be offered. The United Nations Education and Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) which has been fully engaged in providing a universal definition has provided an operational definition which would enable assessment results to be compared internationally. Thus, UNESCO defines functional literacy as the ability of a person to function in all the activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his/her group and the community and also for enabling him/her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his/her own and the community's development (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006:30).

The definition shows that literacy is a context-bound continuum of reading, writing and numeracy skills, acquired and developed through processes of learning and application, in schools and in other settings appropriate to youth and adults. This definition is pragmatic and the benefit of literacy is embedded in it.

The notion of literacy is no longer limited to the formal education setting. Literacy scholars now examine literacy in its social, cultural, historical, economic, and political contexts both in and out of school (Schultz and Hull, 2002). Thus, different types of literacies have emerged and these include: academic literacy, document literacy (which include reading, writing, numeracy deciphering and retrieval processes), family literacy, cultural literacy, multilingual literacy, transnational literacy, digital literacy (also known as Today's literacy), information literacy, agricultural literacy, and health literacy. The discussion of each type is outside the scope of this study. However, as Warriner (2013) observes, whether we are examining reading, writing, and digital literacies, or multilingual literacies, there is the need to also examine the role of time and space—within and across contexts, within and across communities, and within and across practices.

The literacy types that are examined in this study are agricultural and information literacies which are considered to be some of the literacy needs that are germane to the empowerment of rural women in Akoko area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Women empowerment is highly dependent on literacy. Indeed, literacy hastens or leads to empowerment and ultimately human development (UNESCO, 2008; Kabeer, 2009, and UNFPA, 2013). Empowerment as a concept has often been used as a development. Griffen (1987) explains it as having control, or gaining further control; having a say and being listened to; being able to define and create from a women's perspective; being able to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society (not just areas of society accepted as women's place), being recognized and respected as equal citizens with a contribution to make.

Hashemi, Sidney, and Riley (1995) have developed eight empowerment indicators to



measure women's empowerment, especially in a developing country. The eight indicators are: a. Mobility, b. Economic security, c. Ability to make small purchases, d. Ability to make larger purchases, e. Involvement in major decisions, f. Relative freedom from domination by the family, and g. Political and legal awareness. Scholars such as Stromquist (1995) and Kabeer (2009) have explained empowerment from gender perspectives and used it in judging women development.

In the light of these perceptions, empowerment can be said to be more relevant to the marginalized groups – the poor, the illiterates, the indigenous communities, and cutting across these categories, the women. Thus, as Stromquist (1995) submits, the prime target of empowerment must be adult women and, in the context of social justice and transformation, they must be low-income adult women who usually do not have access to income. Access to income and getting empowered, require that they step outside the home and participate in some form of collective undertaking that can be successful. Through that, they will develop a sense of independence and competence among themselves.

Empowerment of the women folk through increased literacy is crucial for a number of reasons. First and foremost, literacy is recognised as a right because of the benefits it confers on individuals, families, communities and nations. According to Kabeer (2009), the acquisition of literacy skills enables individuals to develop and to fulfill their potentials and be involved in all levels of society as equal human beings. Also, Kabeer observes that women's access to and control of valued resources have positive influence on the well-being of the children and the entire family.

Literacy is also regarded as a survival tool in a fiercely competitive world (UNESCO, 2008, p. 8). A recent report from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2013) reveals that educated mothers are usually cognizant of the importance of healthcare, likely to have fewer children, and most often have a greater influence on their children's educational attainment than their fathers, and have more control over household negotiations, and are more likely to be economically active and contribute to the costs of schooling.

Aside the above benefits, the economic empowerment of women (engendered by literacy) could reduce poverty. Kabeer (2009) and Eldred (2013) reveal that households that rely solely or primarily on female earnings (i.e. *female-maintained* households) tend to be over-represented at the lower end of the income distribution. They submit that if women have lower levels of education and skills, if they face discrimination in markets for the sale of their goods, services and wage labour as well as in their access to assets, technology and financial services, their efforts to earn a living for themselves and their dependents are likely to be rewarded more unfavourably than those of men with equivalent characteristics. Conversely, lower income households with male or joint headship are very generally able to rely on women's earnings to keep their households above the poverty line or to prevent it from declining into poverty in times of crisis.

The empowering potential of literacy can translate into increased political participation and thus contribute to the quality of public policies and to democracy. It is



assumed that there is a relationship between education and political participation. Hannum & Buchmann, (2003) believe that countries with more educated populations are more democratic, as their citizens are able to make more informed political decisions. Thus, educated people are to some extent more likely to vote and be more tolerant and democratic. These authors also claim that participation in adult literacy programmes is also correlated with increased participation in trade unions, community action and national political life, especially when empowerment is the core of programme design. The outcomes of adult literacy programmes in Brazil and the United States were used as evidence of these claims.

DFID (2011) show that the education of women and girls has in recent time received an increased focus by international development agencies. The assumption is that investment in women's education will result in better-nourished children, healthier pregnancies, a reduction in HIV / AIDS and or more effective economies. Reports from UNICEF shows that the education of women have positive impact upon infant and maternal mortality rates, improves nutrition, promotes health, reduces the likelihood of HIV / AIDS, and contributes to improved education for the next generation (UNICEF, 2013). Indeed the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or any developmental issues is greatly dependent on the education and empowerment of women who usually play key significant roles.

Another reason for empowering women is that rural women form essential part of the solution to some of today's most serious global challenges, such as food security, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Concerning food security in particular, women play an integral part in agricultural production, as subsistence farmers, cash crop growers, food processors, and livestock owners, among other roles. It follows naturally therefore; that empowering women will impact the agricultural markets overall.

Women's empowerment is recognized as lying at the heart of achieving all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, Stromquist (2005) maintains that the benefits of literacy are only made possible when broader rights and development frameworks are in place and operating effectively.

Given the all important benefits of women empowerment and the great role literacy plays in human empowerment, it is imperative to assess the literacy needs that are considered germane to the empowerment of rural women in Akoko area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Needs assessment itself refers to a systematic process of establishing priorities and making decisions regarding programme planning, development and operation (Mc Caslin & Tibeziinda, 1997). A need can be referred to as a lack of something that is essential to a person's existence or well-being. According to Maslow (1943), for humans to live and attain mental and physical well-being, they need five needs things, namely: physiological, safety-security, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow suggests that the desire to satisfy these basic needs is the primary motivation for human behaviour. But when human grow up in an environment in which the needs are not met, they would not function as healthy and well-adjusted



individuals. Maslow and other human needs theorists argue that most conflicts have to do with other unmet human needs, such as protection, identity, recognition, participation and understanding.

Therefore, using Maslow's theory of human motivation as a framework, this study attempted to assess the literacy needs of Akoko rural women. The women in this location, like their counterparts in other rural locations in Nigeria are actively engaged in one vocation or the other, including agrarian activities. A report from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisations (FAO, 1998) reveals that 80% of rural smallholder farmers worldwide are women and they produce as much as 90% of the food grown in Africa and 50% of the world's food. Lately, Oladapo (2014) also reveals that in Nigeria, rural women constitute 49.6 percent of the total population and are responsible for 60-80 percent of the food produced in the country. Thus, the rural women form an essential part of the solution to some of today's most serious global challenges, such as food security, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Therefore, this necessitates the need to understand their agricultural literacy needs so that they will be able to effectively negotiate market prices, safely use fertilizers, manage a bank account, and engage well other market activities that are critical for their economic empowerment.

However, despite women's active involvement in food production, processing and marketing, social-economic and cultural constraints (which are more prevalent in rural areas than urban centres) limit their access to financial, scientific and technological information that could raise their agricultural productivity. It is still common in this 21st century to see most rural women farmers (men inclusive) in Nigeria using some crude farm implements that sap their energy and in the long run hardly raise their agricultural productivity. These constraints need to be removed. The female farmers, like their male counterparts in Nigeria and the rest of Africa should have equal access to agricultural support services and inputs like credit and improved seeds.

Also, irrespective of their location, women need information literacy for various purposes. Information literacy has been defined as the ability to access, evaluate and use information from a variety of sources. It involves communication, critical thinking and problem solving skills (Huyer & Mitter, 2005). Some of these skills are enabled through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2003) refers to ICTs as information-handling tools—varied set of goods, applications and services that are used to produce, store, process, distribute and exchange information. They include the radio, television and telephone, computers, satellite and wireless technology and the Internet. Radio and television are two of the mass media that could be used effectively to reach out to rural areas, particularly the illiterates. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are seen as the main drivers of contemporary society. Policy makers, planners, and administrators believe ICTs play significant role in promoting objectives, such as poverty alleviation, universal education, reduction in mortality and health hazards, sustainable development and in bridging the digital as well as socio-economic divides in



the world (Dighe & Reddi, 2006). ICTs are significant in promoting women's education, particularly women's literacy. Yet, in most societies of the world, Nigeria inclusive, there is the knowledge gap (or digital divide) between those who have access to knowledge and those without.

Huyer and Mitter (2005) found that when women have access to information (enabled through different ICTs), they can substantially improve their lives and increase their income. They assert that women who have been involved in meaningful ICTs projects have experienced improved economic and social well being, been equipped with skills, training, and market information for their small-scale enterprises. This is aside the advantage of having information on reproductive health which can lead to improved health and limiting number of children and thus, the subsequent positive effect on women's economic activities and their income-earning ability. In particular, the rural women's access to relevant information will serve as a catalyst for participation in Nigeria's national economic development. As Hannum & Buchmann (2003) and Dighe & Reddi (2006) observe, for development effort of any kind to yield the desired dividends, women and girls must be included. Indeed, their submission is that development efforts will only have partial effect unless women are empowered to participate alongside men in development process.

A few empirical studies have been done on needs assessment of rural women in Nigeria. The study by Obiora (2012) focuses on the needs assessment of women farmers in Anambra State, Nigeria. The main aims of the study include the identification of the agricultural needs of the rural women and the description of the socio-economic profile of the women farmers. Among others, the study revealed that the rural women need information about climate change adaptation and mitigation, meteorological information, improved extension services, and subsidized ICTs facilities. Consequently it was recommended in the study that Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) in Anambra state should strategize to meet the agricultural needs of the respondents so as to enable them do their farming work with less stress.

Babasanya, et. al. (2013) examined the perception of women on rural development programme of UNDP in Akoko North LGA, Ondo State. The objectives were to ascertain the awareness level of the programme, identify the factors that impeded the flow of expected deliverables, and to highlight the extent of benefit derived by communities. The findings revealed among others that UNDP rural development programmes, an intervention meant to avert the spread of poverty among rural women is fraught with a lot of implementation bottlenecks that make it seem inadequate in eradicating poverty among the rural womenfolk.

Yusuf's (2013) study on the assessment of the impact of adult literacy programmes on political status of women in Kwara State specifically set out to find out if the political emancipation of adults which forms one of the important objectives of adult literacy programmes in the Kwara State Agency for Mass Education has been met. The adult literacy programmes of the agency (for women) include information about voters' registration, voting in an election, participation in political party's activities,



issues related to election malpractices, and information about quality of government services. Yusuf's findings revealed that all of these were met and on the basis of his findings, he inferred that the inclusion of all these information in the literacy programmes for women in the state shows that adult literacy programmes for the women can lead to their political emancipation. This result is in line with the study of Stromquist (2005), which reported that the evidence from literacy classes showed that learners acquire politically related information which fortifies them to stand politically in their communities.

The present study assesses the agricultural and information literacy needs of rural women in Akoko South West area of Ondo State with a view to determining some of their most urgent and pressing literacy needs. The outcome of the findings should be valuable to government agencies and other agencies of change charged with development programmes for rural women. Also, the findings will enable the government agencies to set priorities right when planning any development programmes for rural women in this locale, and indeed any other rural area in the country and other parts of the developing world.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to assess the literacy needs of the rural women in Akoko South LGA, Ondo State. The specific purposes were to:

1. describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents;
2. to identify the extent of their agricultural literacy needs; and
3. to identify the extent of their information literacy needs.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do the rural women in Akoko South West need agricultural literacy?
2. To what extent do the rural women in Akoko South West need information literacy?

Methodology

Akoko South West Local Government Area, created in 1996 and with its Headquarter in Oka, is one of the 18 LGAs in Ondo State. It is about 102 kilometres to Akure the state capital. The population of the inhabitants is put at 228,383 (male =114,733, female = 113,650), going by 2006 population censor as contained in the National Population Census Report (NPCCR, 2009). The major towns in the LGA include Oka, Iwaro, Oba, Supare, and Akungba-Akoko which houses the state university, Adekunle Ajasin University. The descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select six out of the nine towns in the local government. Two hundred and fifty women constituted the respondents. The self-designed questionnaire contained the respondents' demographic data and 12 questions on agricultural and information literacy respectively. The instrument were reviewed and



adjudged adequate and valid by female specialists in Women Studies Development Centre, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State. The total number of questionnaire retrieved was 250. Both descriptive and inferential statistics like chi-square were used to analyse the data collected. The study provided answers to the two research questions raised for the study.

Results and Discussion

1. What is the demographic characteristics of the rural women in Akoko South West LGA of Ondo State

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Factors	Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20 - 29 years	50	20.0
	30 - 39 years	101	40.4
	40 years and above	99	39.6
	Total	250	100.0
Educational Qualification	No Formal Education	23	9.2
	SSCE	121	48.4
	Grade II	13	5.2
	NCE	79	31.6
	First Degree/ HND	14	5.6
	Total	250	100.0
Occupation	Farming	132	52.8
	Trading	32	12.8
	Sewing	15	6.0
	Teaching	41	16.4
	Fulltime House wife	11	4.4
	Other forms of Artisan	19	7.6
	Total	250	100.0
Marital Status	Married	175	70.0
	Single	45	18.0
	Widowed	8	3.2
	Single Parenting	22	8.8
	Total	250	100.0

Table 1 reveals that most of the respondents are between the ages of 30 and 39 years. This was such that 20% are aged between 20 and 29 years, while 39.6% are aged 40 years and above, while 40.4% are between the ages of 30 and 39 years. The educational attainment indicates that 9.2% did not attain any form of formal education, 48.4%, which is the majority had the Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSC), 5.2% had Teachers 'Grade II Certificate as their highest educational attainment, 31.6% had Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE), while 5.6% had first

degree. Regarding their occupation, majority of the respondents are farmers. That is, 52.8% are involved in farming activities, 12.8% are into trading, 6% are into sewing, 16.4% are in the teaching profession, 4.4% are fulltime house wife, while 7.6% are artisans. The findings on respondents' marital status show that 70% of the respondents are married, 18% are single, 3.2% were widowed, while 8.8% are single parents. The implication of these findings is that majority of the respondents are able-bodied married women. The usual notion is that illiteracy level is high in the rural areas in Nigeria but this study has debunked that. It has shown that most of the respondents have secondary education. It is not surprising because education has continued to penetrate farther and farther into most regions including rural areas in the South West Nigeria. Although most of them are SSSC holders, their major occupation is farming and farming related activities. One may assume that their resignation to village and engagement in these activities could be a result of the prevalence of unemployment (into white-collar jobs) in Nigeria. It could also imply that they choose farming by choice.

Research Question 1. To what extent do the rural women in Akoko South-West need agricultural literacy?

Table 2: Chi Square and frequency summary of statements on agricultural literacy needs of rural women

Items		Response			
		Needed to a very large extent	Needed to a very little extent	Not needed at all	Total
Access to agricultural information	F	124	111	15	250
	%	49.6	44.4	6.0	100.0
Access to information on how to apply agricultural chemicals (weed and pest control)	F	88	135	27	250
	%	35.2	54.0	10.8	100.0
Ability to read instructions on agricultural equipment	F	147	71	32	250
	%	58.8	28.4	12.8	100.0
Access to information on effective management of farm produce	F	164	61	25	250
	%	65.6	24.4	10.0	100.0
Ability to keep record of sales of farm produce	F	157	59	34	250
	%	62.8	23.6	13.6	100.0
Summation on Agricultural Literacy	F	680	437	133	1250
	%	54.4	35	10.6	100.0
	Averaged Frequency	136	88	26	250
	Expected	83.3	83.3	83.3	
	Df	2			
	X ²	72.992			



	P	< .05
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Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents (49.6%) indicated that access to agricultural information is needed to a very large extent, 44.4% indicated that it is needed to a very little extent while 6% indicated that it is not needed at all. Similarly, 58.8% of the respondents affirmed that ability to read instructions on agricultural equipment is needed to a very large extent, 28.4% said it is needed to a very little extent, while 12.8% said it is not needed at all. Access to information on how to apply agricultural chemicals, especially weed and pest control was indicated as a need to a very large extent by 35.2%, while 54% of the respondents said it is needed to a very little extent. Just 10.8% said it is not needed at all. Majority of the respondents (65.6%) affirmed that access to information on effective management of farm produce is a needed to a very large extent, 24.4% said to a very little extent, while 10% said it is not needed at all. Lastly, 62.8% of the respondents indicated that ability to keep record of sales of farm produce is needed to a large extent, 23.6% said it is needed to a little extent, while 13.6% said it is not needed at all. These findings imply that there are requirements of these needs among the women.

The concluding findings show that 54.4% of the respondents had need for agricultural literacy to a very large extent, 35% needed it to a very little extent, while 10.6% indicated no need at all. With the chi square result, it could be concluded that agricultural literacy is needed to a very large extent by respondents: extent ($X^2=72.992$, $df=2$, $p < 0.05$). The majority of them need literacy generally on agriculture but to a large extent particularly on effective management of farm produce and ability to keep record of sales of farm produce. Though the respondents are literate, they do not possess the agricultural literacy needs required to make for better yields of their farm produce. Extraction of information is needed because respondents' knowledge of common English may not be adequate for interpretation of complex technical terms in agriculture. One could conclude that most of the respondents who are SSSC holders are apparently deficient in English and Mathematics, the two crucial subjects that most secondary school students in Nigeria usually fail.

This finding corroborates reports from FAO (1998) and Oladapo (2014) that 80% of rural smallholder farmers worldwide are women and they produce as much as 90% of the food grown in Africa and 50% of the world's food. As such, they need technical knowledge to enable them derive productive use of farm input for optimum yield. Therefore, all the social-economic and cultural constraints (which are more prevalent in rural areas than urban centres) should be removed so that women farmers can access financial, scientific and technological information that will raise their agricultural productivity.

Research Question 2: To what extent do the rural women in Akoko South-West need information literacy?

Table 3: Chi Square and frequency summary of statements on information literacy needs of rural women

Items		Response			
		Needed to a very large extent	Needed to a very little extent	Not needed at all	Total
Obtaining information from radio	F	100	126	24	250
	%	40.0	50.4	9.6	100.0
Watching TV to obtain relevant news	F	115	99	36	250
	%	46.0	39.6	14.4	100.0
Reading the newspaper sections for relevant information	F	143	78	29	250
	%	57.2	31.2	11.6	100.0
Extracting information from manuals accompanying equipment	F	169	54	27	250
	%	67.6	21.6	10.8	100.0
Using the GSM (phone) to access information concerning relevant issues	F	159	73	18	250
	%	63.6	29.2	7.2	100.0
Summation on Information Literacy	F	686	430	134	1250
	%	54.9	34.4	10.7	100.0
	Averaged Frequency	137	86	27	250
	Expected	83.3	83.3	83.3	
	df	2			
	χ^2	72.728			
	P	< .05			

The result in Table 6 shows that 40% of the respondents affirmed that obtaining information from radio is needed to a very large extent, while 50.4% said it is needed to a very little extent. 9.6% of the respondents said it is not needed at all. The need of watching TV to obtain relevant news information is required to a very large extent by 46% of the respondents, and to a very little extent by 39.6% of the respondents, while 14.4% said it is not required at all. It was indicated by 57.2% of the respondents that reading the newspaper sections for relevant information is needed to a very large extent, and to a very little extent by 31.2% , while 11.6% said it is not needed at all. In similar trend, 67.6% of the respondents affirmed that extracting information from manuals accompanying equipment is needed to a very large extent and to a very little extent by 21.6%, while 10.8% said it is not needed at all. Lastly also in same trend, 63.6% affirmed that the use of GSM (phone) to access information concerning relevant

issues is needed to a very large extent and to a very little extent by 29.2%, while 7.2% said it is not needed at all.

The general findings revealed that information literacy is required to a very large extent by 54.9% of the respondents, and to a very little extent by 34.4% of the respondents, while 10.7% said it is not needed at all ($\chi^2 = 72.728$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that information literacy is needed to a very large extent. The rural women need information literacy generally but to a large extent and particularly, they are in dire need of information literacy on the use of the GSM mobile phones to access information on relevant issues.

The finding agrees with those of Dighe and Reddi (2006) that in most societies of the world, Nigeria inclusive, there is the knowledge gap (or digital divide) between those who have access to knowledge and those without. Yet, it is access to information that engenders poverty alleviation, universal education, reduction in mortality and health hazards, sustainable development and in bridging the digital as well as socio-economic divides in the world. Indeed as Dighe and Reddi suggest, women and girls must be included in any kind of development effort in order to get the desired dividends.

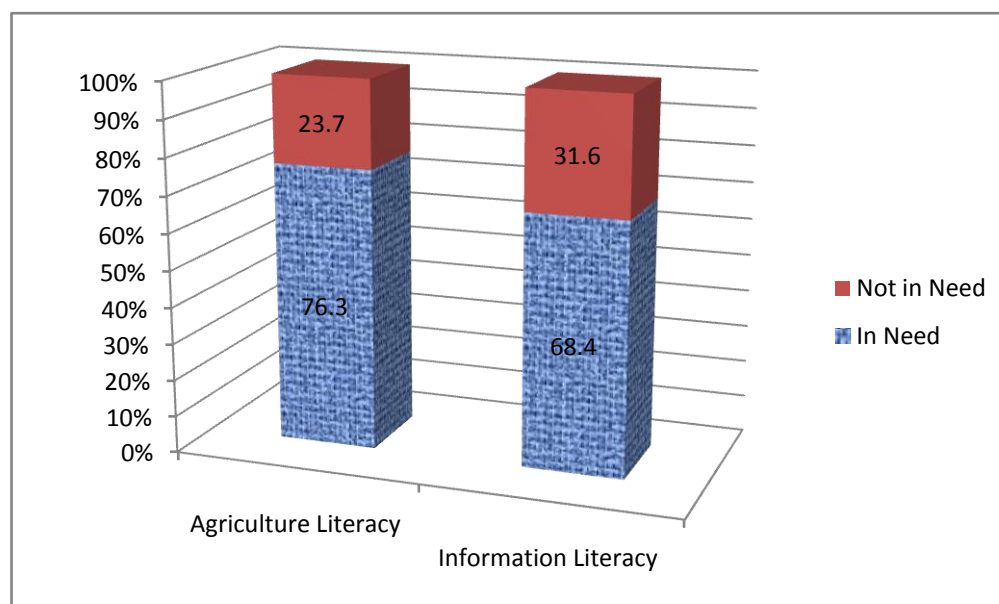


Figure 1: Histogram showing the most needed literacy among women in Akoko South-West of Ondo State

The result in Figure 1 above was based on the mean scores of the responses on items measuring literacy needs. The most needed form of need was agriculture need with a mean score of 7.86, while the need for information had a mean score of 7.21. From the mean distribution, it was further understood that 76.3% of the respondents had need for agriculture with just 23.7% not in need, while the need for information



was 68.4% with 31.6% having no need for them. These findings imply that the most required form of need from the rural women in Akoko South-West of Ondo State are the agricultural and information literacies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Women play significant role in sustainable development so, empowering them is crucial for the realization of any form of development. Despite their significant roles however, most rural women in Nigeria but particularly in the locale of focus lack literacy skills which are germane to their empowerment and development. On the basis of the respondents' needs assessment, some recommendations are made. Women should have access to agric loans, fertilizers and other agricultural inputs that can increase their farm produce. For those engaged in non-farm economic activities, loans should be given to enable them increase their production and turnover. Also, extension and other agriculture service providers should be available in rural areas so as to train women farmers on regular basis on how to improve and increase their farm produce. The rural women folk should be empowered in different business ventures through adult education programmes. Government should encourage women's participation in adult literacy programme so that they will be equipped with the skills required to get the needed agricultural literacy through modern communication channels such as radio, TV and the mobile phones which most of the women respondents said they needed to a great extent. Undoubtedly, difficult access to transport and communication networks that are sources of information, innovation, technology, and finances have continued to adversely affect development in rural areas. In the light of all these limitations and many more, it will not be out of place if village-based micro-finance banks offer women loans to buy phones and other affordable and user-friendly medium of communication.

There is need to use ICTs to develop information literacy among poor women. To do this, government should create awareness of information literacy and enhance information sources. This measure will enable rural women have access to the needed information on every aspect of their endeavours.

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