INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

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EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FARMERS ASSOCIATIONS IN FACILITATING CLIENTELE INVOLVEMENT IN AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN PORT LOKO DISTRICT NORTHERN SIERRA LEONE

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ABSTRACT
In recent years development emphasis has shifted from the conventional top-bottom approach to encouragement of people – cantered development approach, which is bottom –top. In response, many rural organizations in the form of rural cooperatives societies, work groups, farmers associations and farming groups have been formed by the beneficiaries themselves. This paper examines reports on a study that investigated the effectiveness of farmers associations in facilitating clientele participation in agricultural development programmes in Port Loko district, Northern Sierra Leone. The study was conducted in eleven Chiefdoms in the Port Loko District. A stratified random sampling was used to select the District, while purposive and simple random sampling technique was used for selecting the farmers and the Farmers Association Executive Officers from the Chiefdoms. Questionnaire, divided into three sections and comprising of structured and semi-structured questions, was administered to 110(55 executive farmers and 55 non-executive officers) respondents. The findings of the study revealed that 80.9% of the respondents were males, and 19.1% were females. The Chi-Squire test X^2 result showed that there was an association between sex and participation in decision-making in farmers associations. All (100.0%) of the executive were married. The average years in existence were 7.9. All (100.0%) executive members attended meetings. Overall, the rebel war and the Ebola outbreak; untimely, uneven and inadequate supply of inputs, inadequate funds, inability to meet preconditions for membership and social events were dominant factors preventing effective involvement of members. It was concluded that the inadequacies of farmers associations to effectively facilitate participation in agricultural development programmes be removed. It was recommended that conscious effects be made to encourage women participation in farmers associations, that power be devolved to farmers; the knowledge and skills of the executive members be developed in decision –making, group dynamics and programme management

KEY WORDS: Farmers Associations, Clientele Involvement, Development Activities

INTRODUCTION

In almost every developing country, agriculture is the basis for economic development. Agriculture provides food, clothing and shelter for the growing population. Equally so, it supplies capital and raw materials for the non-agricultural production. Beside, agriculture continues to absorb a large number of growing labour potential. This, in turn, calls for intensive technologies and appropriate institutions such as farmers associations for organizing groups and harnessing resources for agricultural development and food security. These associations' help to avoid the deterioration of rural regions and as far as possible, the rural exodus, to the teeming slums in the urban centres. Notwithstanding these significant roles of agriculture in the developing countries, the rise in production has still been less than the growth of the population. Hence, the amount of food available to each person in many countries actually has declined. Furthermore, an increase in output does not in itself imply a better distribution of benefits. Thus, the subsistence farmers and the rest of the rural population have hardly benefited significantly from the limited expanding agricultural production. In Sierra Leone, Agriculture is one of the most important economic activities. It employs the majority (80%) of the population of 5.0 million populations (SSL, 2004). According to FAO (1996 -1997), 23,060 families are actively engaged in farming. They operate smallholdings averaging 4.4 acres. This contributes some 35% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and 16.0% of the export earning capacity of the country. According to World Bank (1979), 80% of the population lived in the rural areas and depend on agricultural activities for their livelihood. This demonstrated a direct relationship between agriculture and rural development. The performance of the agricultural sector has been poor. The value of per capital agricultural output appears to have fallen by about 3% at per annum. This was due mainly to existing structural and policy constraints (Modi, 1993). The poor performance of the agricultural sector would be attributed to macro and micro economic effects on the sector, poor infrastructure; weaknesses in the extension system of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security; low level of involvement of clientele in most aspects of agricultural development programmes; the past ten years of rebel war; and the recent Ebola outbreak. Thus the Government of Sierra Leone is concerned about

this poor performance, and is now attempting to address the basic problems of the agricultural sector.

Apart from the very low annual income earned by agricultural production, poor living conditions in the rural areas added to the disincentives. As a result of these conditions, a considerable number of able -bodied working –age men and women had left their villages for larger communities in order to take a chance in the search of wage employment, and to enjoy the much better amenities provided by such communities. Thus, the villages were been depleted of the most productive and innovative members with attendance effects on farm production in the country with an abundant fertile land. The situation has worsened by the one year Ebola outbreak in the county where many farmers died of the disease. In its effort to overcome these inadequacies, women often reduce the quality of life; the rural population has traditionally cooperated closely in communal activities which are of benefits to all, including the formation of rural organizations, construction of Mosques, Churches, feeder roads, drinking water facilities, health clinics, drying floors and stores. Foubert's (1987) study of agriculture and rural development programmes has shown low level of involvement of farmers in most aspects of agricultural development programmes. This low participation could have resulted from the widely adopted conventional top-bottom approach of the planning and delivery of development interventions. In recent years, however, development emphasis has shifted to encouragement of people –centered development. In response to this, many rural organizations and farming groups have been formed by farmers themselves. These rural organizations are said to practice participatory approach in all aspects of their programmes activities. They utilize both human and non-human resources available for rehabilitation of the agricultural sector.

To some extent, farmers associations were said to have played remarkable and visible roles in promoting agricultural and rural development programmes in Port Loko District, which was relatively stable during the early period of the rebel war and Ebola outbreak. However, the majority of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Despite its importance, the sector has neither been able to meet food needs of the nation, nor has its potential to contribute adequately to national development fully realized. A government effort to develop agriculture and thereby raise the standard of living of rural people has been directed through research institutions, extension services, Non-Government Organizations, and Rural organizations. Yet, this goal has still been elusive. There is, therefore, an increasing interest among farmers and development organizations in developing the agricultural industry in Sierra Leone, which is in line with the National Development Policy. Despite this acclaimed contribution of farmers associations, little or no study has been done in determining the effectiveness of these associations in facilitating clientele participation in agricultural development programmes, hence the main trust of this study. It is hoped that the findings of this study would throw some light on the understanding of the management of farmers associations and ways of making them serve their members. It is further hoped that the result of the study would be useful to rural development practitioners, sociologists and other social scientists in the formulation of development strategies, which minimize participation of rural people in agricultural development programmes. The findings would also enhance or modify relevant strategies used by National Association of Farmers of Sierra Leone (NAFSL) in ensuring suitable development in the agricultural sector. In addition, this study would also act as a guide to Government (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security) and extension Agents in their effort to involve farmers associations fully in agricultural development programmes in the country. The results of this study would add to the existing body of knowledge of the concept of participation, especially as it relates to effectiveness of farmers associations in agricultural development, and would stimulate further research in this area. The overall purpose of the study was to evaluate the extent to which farmers associations have helped in facilitating clientele participation in agricultural development programmes. To achieve this, the study was guided by three specific objectives to analyze the general Characteristics of farmers, examine the organizational structure and management characteristics of selected associations and determine the factors influence clientele participation in agricultural development programmes.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study was conducted in Port Loko District, Northern Province of Sierra Leone (Figure1).

Port Loko District is miles from Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone and lies on Latitude: 8°45'0" and Longitude: -12°40'0.01" with a total area of 5,719 km2 (2,208 sq mi) and population of 460230 habitants. The estimate terrain elevation above sea level is 51 meters (SSL, 2004). The population of Port Loko District is predominantly Muslim and the Temne people form by far the largest ethnic group in the district. The District comprised of 11 Chiefdoms- Sanda –Magbolonto, Tinkatupa-Makama, Loko-Masama- Seabrook (TMS), Dibia, Buya-Romendi, Marampa, Masimera, Koya, Kafufu-Bullom, Loko-Masama, Bureh-Kasseh-Maconteh (BKM) and Marfoki. Port Loko District is accessed by a network of roads from Freetown and other provincial headquarter town. The District can also be reached by boat from Freetown and Pepel via the Port Loko Creek. The research area consists of four (4) main topographic units- coastal plains, coastal terraces, interior plains and bolilands. The area is drained by three major river basins: the Little Scarcies (including the Mabole River), the Port Loko River (including the Bankasota) and the Rokel River. They meander extensively and empty into the sea in wide estuaries. The soil in the area of is characterized by low (PH 4.5–5), iron toxicity, porous structure and low clay content (MAFFS, 2007), the use of land is controlled by family groups, clans and extended families. Traditionally, the Temne (the dominant tribe in research area and the

second largest tribe in the county) do not recognize individual property rights over land. Leasing or pledge systems of land rights are also known to exist within the area. The major occupations of majority of the population are farming, fishing and trading. The selection of this District was made on several grounds: First, some parts had remained relatively safe and unattached by rebels, during the past ten (10) years of rebel carnage. Secondly, the region is typically an agricultural area where local farmers have long been working with farmers associations. Thirdly, the area contains an "Integrated Agricultural Development Project", whose domination was changed to Farmers Association Support Project (FASP), with the overall objective of raising agricultural productivity and income levels of the target rural communities. The above stated reasons make the region an excellent field laboratory to study the effectiveness of farmers associations in facilitating clientele participating in agricultural development programmes in Sierra Leone in Sierra Leone. Majority of the farmers associations and the National Association of Farmers in Sierra Leone (NAFSL) continue to operate in the area with the assistance from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security. They are involved in agricultural and rural development programmes, particularly working with small-scale farmers limited resource farmers. There are more 208 farmers associations registered with National Association of Farmers in Sierra Leone (NAFSL, 2013), with a membership of over 8000 farmers in the various Chiefdoms of Port Loko District. However, some farmer associations were not registered with NAFSL. There is an Umbrella association of farmers associations in each of the 11 Chiefdoms. Most of the executive and non-executive members of these associations are subsistence farmers, living in small villages. They are involved in activities such as mining, farming (production of food crops (rice, cassava, and sweet potato), fishing and trading. The social and economic conditions in these villages' are generally poor, thus needing development interventions.

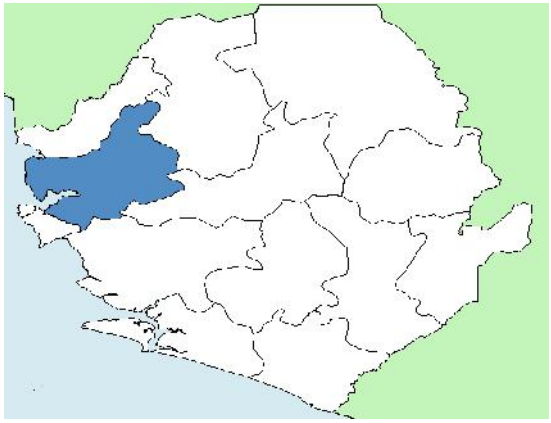

FIGURE 1: Map of Sierra Leone Showing Study Area

Study Population: The study population consists of all farmers and farmers association in Port Loko District.

Sample Size and Sampling selection: For the purpose of this study, the multi-stage random sampling technique was used to obtain the sample respondents. The first stage in the multi-stage technique was the purposive selection of the Port Loko District in the North. This district was chosen because there are many farmers associations found in this District. The second stage involved a random selection of five farmers associations. For this, a list of all registered farmers associations and their locations was obtained from the District Chairman and the Chiefdom Chairman of the umbrella association in each Chiefdom. Five farmers associations were randomly selected from each of the Chiefdoms, and two respondents from each association (one executive member and one non-executive member) were interviewed. The selection of the five farmers association from each of the Chiefdoms as based on the following criteria:

I. Farming (crop production) should be the major occupation of its members
II. The number of the members in the association must not be less than 45; and
III. The associations selected from each of the Chiefdoms must be 10 miles apart.

The sampling method was resorted to, in order to ensure that typical farmers associations were selected. In all, 55 farmers associations were selected and a sample size of 110 respondents interviewed. One of the basic principles of impact assessment evaluation design is selection of a control group (Bamberger *et al*., 2004). Non- farmer association members were selected to serve as control group and were defined as those who had no participated in farmer's association activities. There was no assumption that non-participants had not received any information about the associations' activities. Non-members of farmer associations were interviewed informally to gather information on their perceptions on the activities of the farmers associations. The Officers of the Non-Governmental Organizations, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security and other private agencies were also interviewed. All of these provided the information on which this study is based.

Research Instrument

The instrument for data collection for the study consisted main of semi structured and structured questionnaire, consisting of for subsections based on the objectives of the study. Section **A** collected information on the characteristics of the farmers and the farmers associations, while section **B** solicited data on the organizational structure and management characteristics of selected associations and Section **C** sought out information on the factors influence clientele participation in agricultural development programmes. The instrument for data collection was subjected to pre-test in Bombali District, which was not part of the sample, while validity and reliability tests were carried out. Validity test included face validity and content validity.

Face validity

The validity of the instrument was tested by 5 experts from the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI), Extension department, Agricultural Economics Department of Njala University and National Association of Farmers in Sierra Leone (NAFSL). The face validity of the instrument was measured by the experts who confirmed that the questionnaire contained items that would solicit the intended response on the effectiveness of farmers associations in facilitating clientele participating in agricultural development programmes in Sierra Leone. Also, the experts reviewed the items of clarity and ensured all that could confuse respondents and research assistants were removed. The construct validity was ensured by correlating the score of test administration of the instrument with that of another one with high level of construct using Pearson Product Movement Correlation. A correlation of the test scores of the two instruments on the 5 farmers gave a correlation coefficient of 0.75. This was significant at $p<0.05$. This indicated that the instrument clearly measures appropriately the same construct measured with other instrument. Only beneficiaries (farmers) who would not constitute part of the final study were used in this construct.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot study was conducted to validate the questionnaire and to confirm the feasibility of the study. Thus, the questionnaire was subject to a pilot test conducted with 5 farmers and 5 extension agents in Kambia District which was not included in the survey. Cronbach's Alpha test was applied to test the reliability. Only elements with alpha value of 0.73 or above were considered (Nunnally, 1978). For all the variables Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.832 (at 0.5 levels) which showed the internal consistency of the scales. This also elucidates that the statements in the questionnaire were understood by the sample respondents. The quality of the questionnaire was ascertained and the test shows high reliability. Based on the pilot study, the questionnaire was reviewed and modified duly to bring out responses from the sample women beneficiaries.

Data Collection

A triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data was collected for this study. The data of this study were therefore collected by employing a number of data collection techniques. The techniques used were meant to reinforce each other and to enhance the reliability of the data. The data collection techniques used in the field survey were questionnaires, oral interviews and formal discussions, Participant Observation, Focus discussion, Desk survey, and Examination of NGOs' regional as well as national records and other relevant literatures.

The Field work took place between 1st June and 15 July, 2015. Given the limited time and resources available for the study, data collection relied mainly on quantitative and qualitative methods, using instruments such as administration of questionnaires, focus group discussion, semi-structured interviews, and key, informant interviews. The questions were vetted in an intensive two –day session with enumerators. The goals of the training were to have field enumerators contribute to instrument design; ensure their understanding of the instrument; and identify sampling frames. Revisions of the instruments included the deletion of several items to reduce the length of the questionnaire. Five extension workers, (three females and males) who had earlier participated in a a similar pre and post test assessment of the farmers association were used as enumerators for the study because they were familiar with the study objectives, and had been previously screened for familiarity with the local language (Themne), and knowledge of the survey methodology and the farming system. A one day training workshop for enumerators was held to review the final questionnaire. A pre-test of the instrument was conducted by teams of the five enumerators with five farmers. All questions were completed through personal interviews conducted by the five interviewers. Each enumerator completed 22 questionnaires with both members (Participants) and non-members (Non-participants). Stakeholders were purposively selected from each farmer's association communities for focus group discussion using semi-structured questionnaires, and in some cases, limited individual questionnaires. Key informant interview was used to provide additional information or triangulation data from community survey.

Data Analysis

Many tools that offer the framework for the analysis of data survey existed. In order to handle the research questions following analytical methods were used namely: (1) Descriptive statistics and (2) Chi –Squire Test. To achieve the first research objective, a descriptive statistics was used. The information collected was first summarized to give raw scores. Some of the raw scores were then converted into percentages and presented in tabular forms. The second type of the application of Chi-squire test (Test for independence in contingency Table) Gomez and Gomez, (1976) was utilized in the study. The level of significance chosen for this study was 5 %(0.05). The numbers of classes in the data were tested on two classification criteria, one with row (r) classes and another with columns(c) classes. This non-parametric statistics was used to measure whether there was any significant difference in observed value or situation and some predetermined expected values or situations or not.

Chi-Squire was used in determining relationship because it is distribution free and can be used whether data is skewed or unskewed.

RESULTS

1. Characteristics of Respondents

Sex of Sample Respondents: The sex of sample respondents was assessed and the findings show that 80.9% of the respondents were males and 19.1% were females. Out of the 80.0% males, 41.0% were executive members, while 39.1% were non-executive members. Of the 19.1% women respondents, 8.2% were executive members and the rest (10.9%0 formed the non-executive members. These results indicated that women still lag behind their male counterpart in terms of enrolment and participation in farmers associations in the study area. The relationship between sex and participation in decision –making was tested. The X^2 test result of 26.7 with 1 degree of freedom is greater than the X^2 Table value of 3.34 for 5% level of significant. There is therefore significant evidence for an association between sex and participation in decision-making in farmers associations. The proportion of male members participating in decision-making differs significantly from female farmers. More men than expected were participating in decision-making of farmers associations, and more women than expected were not participating in the decision-making.

TABLE 1: Sex of respondents against participation in decision-making

	Sex		
Decision -making	Male	Female	Total
Participation	81(72.8)	9(17.2)	90
Non-Participation	8 (16.2%)	12(3.8)	20
Total	89	21	110

Figures in bracket indicate expected values.
df = 1, p= 0.05, $X^2_{Tab.} = 3.84$, $X^2_{Cal.} = 3.44$.

Age of Sample Respondents

The minimum and maximum ages for the sample size were 21 and 75 years respectively. The modal age value for the sample was 39 years and the mean age was 45. The age range value for the sample was 54. The majority of the respondents (62.7%) were within the reproductive age group (21-40 years). The youngest executive member was 38 years and the oldest was 75 years. The modal age value was 45 years and the mean age was 49 years. Of the 55 executive members, 61.8% were below the mean age, and the rest (38.2%) were above the mean age. The youngest non-executive member was 21 years and oldest non-executive member was 65 years. The modal age value was 35 years and the average age was 41 years. Of the 55 non-executive members, 60.0% were below the average age of 41 years. The data revealed that there were older executive members than the non-executive members. The standard deviation was 7.8 for executive members and 10.4 for the non-executive members, indicating that there was more variation in the age of non-executive members than executive members.

Marital Status of Sample Respondents

The results of marital status of respondents are presented in Table 2. The results showed that all but six (who were non-executive members) of the respondents interviewed (94.5%) were married. All of the executive members (100.0%) were married. Small proportions were either single (2.7%) or widowed (2.7%) and all of them were non-executive members. The high proportion of married sample respondents in the selected farmers associations indicates that married is still an important institution in the study area.

TABLE 2. Distribution of Sample Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Executive Members No.(%)	Non-Executive Members No.(%)	Total No.(%)
Married	55(100.0%)	49(89.1%)	104(94.6%)
Single	0(0.0%)	3(2.7%)	3 (2.7%)
Widow	0(.0%)	3(2.7%)	3(2.7%)
Total	55(100.0%)	55(100.0%)	110(100.0%)

Size of Household

The data on household size was analyzed and showed an average household size of 7, and that household sizes varied from 3 persons to 14 persons for the sample. Those for executive members range from 4 persons to 14 persons and 3 persons to 12 persons for non-executive members. Of the 55 executive members, 81.8% had household size below the mean household size. Of the 55 non-executive member household sizes, 76.4% were above the mean household size and 23.6% were below the mean household size. The modal value for household sizes for sample respondents was 8. The result suggested that most the respondents in the study area still have large families.

Religion

Majority of the respondents (80.0%) were Muslims and the rest (20.0%) were Christians. This result showed that the study area is a Muslim predominated area.

The relationship between religion and participation in decision –making was tested. X^2 test result 3.44 with 1 degree of freedom at 5% level of significance is small that X^2 Table value of 3.84. This showed that religion has no significant influence on participation in decision –making in farmers association in the study area.

Position Holding

Position holding among respondents was investigated and the results revealed that majority of the respondents (94.5%) were not position holders, while the remainder (5.5%) reported holding positions. Those who reported holding positions were executive members. Out of the 5.5% position holders, 3.7% were males, while 1. 8% were females.

The association between position holding and sex was tested. The X^2 test result of 0.14 with 1 degree of freedom at 5% level of significance is less than the Tabulated X^2 Table value of 3.84. This showed that there is no significant evidence of association between sex and position holding in farmers association.

Education Level

The educational level of the sample respondents is presented in Table 3. The Table showed that 30.0% of the respondents had received some formal education, and the rest (70.0%) never received formal education. Of those who received formal education, slightly 25.5% attained secondary and more of these were executive members (29.1%) than non-executive members (21.8%). Only small proportions attained primary level (3.6%) and Tertiary (0.9%) and again more of these were executive members. The one person who attained tertiary education went to a Teacher Training College and received a Teachers Certificate (TC). This was an executive member.

On the whole, sample respondents who had received formal education were higher for the executive members (36.4%) and higher for the non-executive members (23.6%). The high proportion of the two categories – executive members (58.2%) and non-executive members (67.3%) not going to school would have implications for position holding and decision-making in farmers association.

TABLE 3: Distribution of Sample Respondents by Educational Level

	Executive Members	Non-Executive Members	Total
Education Status	No. (%)	No. (%)	No.(%)
Primary Education	3 (5.5%)	1(1.8%)	4 (3.6%)
Secondary Education	16(29.9%)	12(21.8%)	28 (25.5%)
Tertiary education	1(1.8%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.9%)
Arabic education	1(1.8%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.9)
No education	32(58.2%)	37(67.3%)	69(62.7%)
Non-formal	2(3.6%)	5(9.1%)	7(6.7%)

TABLE 4: Distribution of Sample Respondents by Involvement in Other Occupations

	Executive Members (Mentions)	Non-Executive Members (Mentions)	Total (Mentions
Occupations	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Petty Trading	21(65.6%)	30(71.4%)	51(68.9%)
Teaching	1(3.1%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.4%)
Court Chairmen	2(6.3%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.4%)
Chiefdom Clerks	1(3.1%)	00.0%)	2(2.7%)
Police	1(3.1%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.4%)
Soap Making	3((9.4%)	12(28.6%)	1(1.4%)
Bread Making	1(3.1%)	0(.0%)	15(20.3%)
Driving	1(3.1%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.4%)
Carpentry	1(3.1%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.4%)
Total	32(100.0%)	42 (100.0%)	74(100.0%)

Occupation

The main occupation of the respondents was farming. Apart from farming respondents asked whether they were involved in other economics activities. Of the 110 Sample farmers associations members 36(32.7%) were not engaged in other activities other than farming. The majority of the association members 74 (67.3%) were carrying out other economic activities apart from farming. The Table reveals that 68.9% of the mentions were advanced in relation to petty trading as dominant other occupation members were engaged in , and the proportions were higher in non-executive members and executive members, but more so for non-executive members (71.4%) than executive members (65.6%). The second other occupation was soap making (20.3%). More of the mentions in relation to the occupation (28.6%) were advanced by non-executive members and relatively small proportion of the mentions (9.4%) was given executive members. Other occupations such as court chairmanship, teaching, police bread making, driving, and carpentry were mentioned less. Overall, the two important occupations apart from farming were petty trading and soap making. The implication of

respondents engaging in other occupations may create competition for labour for farming.

General information on Sample Farmers Association

The locations of associations, their Year of existence are presented in Figure 5. The figure reveals that 55 farmers associations selected were coming from 55 different villages in the 11 Chiefdoms in Port Loko District, which is the study area. The membership by Chiefdom ranged from 307(Marfoki Chiefdom) to1163 (Buya Romende Chiefdom). Average membership per association in the study area was 111. The minimum number of members per association was 45. This was for three Farmers Associations (Malal, Marfoki Chiefdom) and Laminaya Farmers Association (Making, BKM Chiefdom). The maximum number of members was 50 for Wusia Farmers Association (Gbomsemba, Buya Romende Chiefdom).The total membership by Chiefdom was higher for Buya Romende and high for Kaffu Bullon and Lokomasama. This was followed by TMS, Marampa, Masimera, Dibia, Sanda Magbolonto, Koya, BKM and Maforki. High membership was because of their collaboration with Farmers Associations Support Projects (FASP) in the District, by the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS). The minimum and maximum numbers of years these associations have been in existence are 3 for National Farmers Association (Gbomesemba, Buya Romende) and 25 years for Sanagetti Agriculture Farmers Association (Gbonko Kasongo, Kaffu Bullom). The overall average year in existence was 7.9. Of the 55 farmers associations, 50.9% were below the average years in existence, while 49.1% were above the average years in existence indicating their experience.

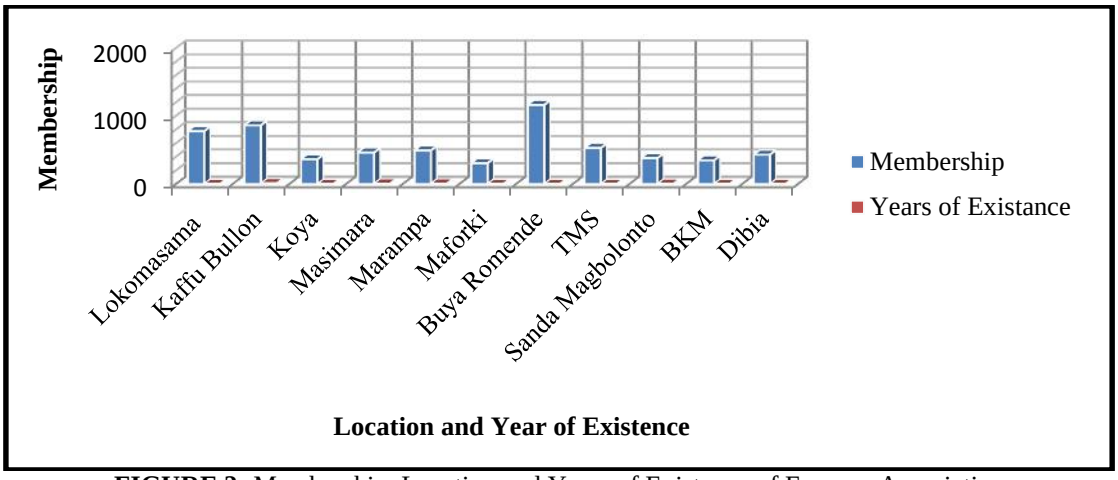

FIGURE 2: Membership, Location and Years of Existence of Farmers Association

Objectives of the farmers Association

The objectives of the farmers associations are presented in Figure --. The Figure showed that the two dominant actives were income generation and agricultural production (21.8%). These were followed by social activities (20.0%), input distribution (18.2%), community development project (12.7%), and skills training (5.5%).

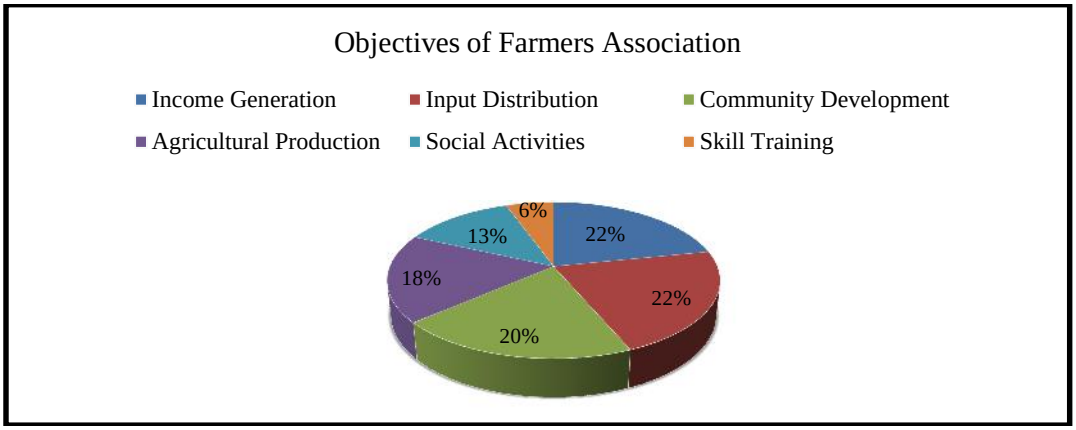

FIGURE 3: Objectives of Farmers Association

Sources of funding

The sources of funding for the farmers association are presented in Figure 4. The figure reveals that 76.4% of the farmers associations (FAs) in the study area have received some funds from government and external agencies such as International and Local Non-Governmental Organizations.

Less 33.6% of the associations never received funds outside their association. The main source of internal funding for FAs are proceeds from sales, monthly contributions, fines from defaulters, donations, registration fees, sales of membership cards, hiring association's labour, and interest on loans. These sources are exploited to ensure the sustainability of his associations and the achievement of the various goals of the associations.

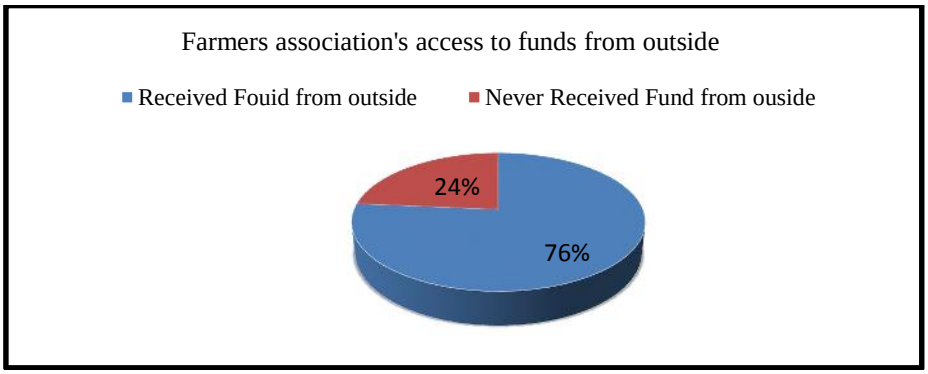

FIGURE 4: Farmers Associations' Access to external founds

2. Farmers Association Management and Nature of Involvement of Clientele

The Farmers Association management and nature of involvement of clientele are presented in Table 5. The Table reveals that all executive members interviewed (100.0%) reported attending management and general meetings. The table further shows that majority of the issues discussed by executive members were crop production and management (27.8%), followed by increase production (17.7%), road, store and drying floor construction (11.0%), input supply (10.1%) and innovation in agriculture (9.1%). Communal/ group work, marketing of produce, livestock production (6.1% each), and provision loan/credit (5.6%) as issues discussed at meeting were mentioned relatively less. Issues mostly discussed at general meetings range from crop production and management to social activities. The dominant issues discussed were crop production and management, seeking assistance and income generation, scoring 18.9% each. This is followed by community development (12.0%), farming calendar (9.6%0, delegation of responsibility (7.9%) and social activities (6.2%).

Sixty-five point five percent of the respondents reported making suggestions at meeting, but indicated that their suggestions are mostly not taken into consideration. The rest (34.5%) reported not making suggestions. The dominant suggestion proportion-wise was income general (28.5%) the suggestion to increase monthly contribution was second (18.1%), followed by adequate and timely supply of input (15.5%) and incorporation of social events (14.0%). Provision of loans and increasing yield accounted for 8.8% each and formation of subcommittees or groups scored 6.2% of all the mentioned of suggestions. The management team comprised of the executive members of all farmers associations. They are responsible for taking 52.7% of key decisions on behalf of their associations. The coordinators or chairman of the executive members were responsible for taking (18.2% of key decisions in the associations the leader farmers in various associations were taking 27.2% of some key decisions in relation to certain activities. All of these position holders in the various farm associations. Over two-fifths of the sample members (45.5%) reported that key decisions were implemented through every member in the association. Working committees as a method was advanced by over one-third (36.4%) of the respondents in implementing decisions reached in meeting. Nearly one-fifth of the members (18.1%0) carried out implantation in their association by delegation of responsibilities to come. The result showed that non-executive members were not involved in taking key decisions but were expected to participate in the implementation of those decisions. The dominant channel of communication used by the executive members to reach the non-executive members was verbal information. This channel accounted slightly over three-fifths (60.4%) of all mentions. The second important channel was a local meeting during which information was passed to members. Local meetings scored slightly over one-fourth (25.3%) of the mentions. The letters scored least (14.3%), reflecting the high illiteracy rate in the rural area. The majority of the sample respondents (96.6%) considered these channels of communication to be effective. The rest (3.4%) mentioned that these channels were not effective, especially the use of letters. According to them, to make communication more effective is to involve non- executive members in decision –making and the use of bicycles for speedy transfer of information.

TABLE 4: Farmers Association Management and Nature of Involvement of Clientele

Nature of Involvement of Clientele	Mentions
Meeting Attendance and issues discussed at meetings	
Attend Meetings	110(100.0%)
Do not attend meetings	0(0.0%)
Making Suggestions at Meeting	
Issues discussed at Management Meetings (N= 198)	
Crop Production	55(27.8)
Communal/Group Work	12(6.1%)
Provision of Loan/Credit	11(5.6%)
Innovation in Agriculture	18(9.1%)
Road, Store and dry Floor Construction	23(11.6%)
Market of Produce	12(6.1%)
Livestock Production	12(6.1%)
Increase Production	35(17.7%)
Input Supply	20(10.1)
Issues discussed at General Meetings (N=291)	
Crop production and management	55(18.9%)
Seeking assistance	55(18.9)
Farming calendar	28(9.6%)
Income generation	55(18.9%)
Community development	35(12.0%)
Social activities	18(6.2%)
Delegation of responsibility	23(7.9%)
Group/Communal Work	22(7.6%)
Making Suggestions at General Meetings (N=193)	
Formation of sub-committees/ groups	12 (6.2%)
Incorporation of social events	27(14.0)
Timely and adequate supply of of Inputs	17(8.8%)
Increasing monthly Contribution	30(15.5%)
Increasing yield	17(8.8%)
Income generation	55(28.5%)
Decision making and implementation	
Key decision takers (N=55)	Mentions
Management Team	29(52.7%)
Leader farmer	15(27.3%)
Coordinator/Chairman	10(18.2)
Project Chairman	1(1.8%)
Methods used implementation Decision Reached at Meetings (N=55)	
By every member in the association	25(45.5%)
Formation of working committees	20(36.5%)
Delegation of responsibilities to someone	10(18.1%)
Communication Channels(N=55)	
Verbal	33(60.4)
Local Meetings	14(25.3%)
Use of letters	8(14.3%)

4.Factors affecting Participation of members in Agricultural Development Programmes (A.D.P.)

The problems either clienteles and or organizations based are presented in Table 4. The Table indicates that the dominant factors affecting members effective involvement in agricultural development were the ultimate, uneven and inadequate supply of inputs , the rebel war and Ebola outbreak each Scoring (22.0%) of the mentions in relation to problems militating against members involvement in agricultural development. This view was stronger in the executive members than the non-executive members. The third important factor was the inadequate fund and this view accounted for 15.4%) of the responses. Again, executive members are higher on this view. Inability to meet preconditions for membership and social events were 13.2% and inadequate and 12.8%, and non executive members were strong on these views. The behavior of the executive members (7.6%) and inadequate extension service (6.4%) were mentioned as factors. Various activities have been undertaken by farmers associations while the former was

given only by non-executive members, the executive members were stronger on the latter. Poor communication (0.4%) was mentioned less and only the executive members put forward such views.

The overall picture is that the rebel war and the recent Ebola outbreak; untimely, uneven and inadequate supply of inputs; inadequate funds; inability to meet precondition s for membership and social; events were the dominant factors preventing effective involvement of members. The behavior of the executive members mentioned less but that view must be taken serious.

TABLE 5: Distribution of Responses by problems affecting involvement of members in A.D.P

	EMs	NEMs	Total
Problems affecting Participation	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Rebel war	55(25.6%)	55(19.4%)	110(22.0%)
Ebola outbreak	55(25.6%)	55(19.4%)	110(22.0%)
Ultimate, uneven and inadequate supply of inputs	2(0.9%)	0(0.0%)	2(0.4%)
Poor Communication network	45(20.9%)	32(11.3%)	77(15.4%)
Inadequate funds	45(20.9%)	32(13.3%)	77(15.4%)
Behavior of Executive Members	0(0.0%)	38(13.4%)	38(7.6%)
Social events	45(20.2%)	42(14.8%)	64(12.8%)
Inadequate extension services	16(7.4%)	16(5.6%)	32(6.4%)
Inability to meet preconditions for membership	20(9.3)	46(16.2%)	66(13.2%)
Total	215(100%)	28(100.0%)	499(100.0%)

Constraints of Farmers Associations face in the study area.

Table 6 reveals that the constraints faced by Farmers Associations were the rebel wars; Ebola outbreak, inability to access loan for the members; untimely supply of inputs, each scoring 16.6%. On these problems the views of the executive members were slightly stronger than non-executive members. On inadequate and inappropriate farm inputs (11.7%), inadequate donor support (11.6%), ineffective extension service (10.2%) again the executive members were higher than the non-executive members. Inability of some executive members to manage their associations (8.7%) and inadequate sensitization (7.9%) were advanced more by non-executive members than executive members. On the whole, the rebel war; inability to access to loan; untimely supply of inputs; inadequate and inappropriate farm inputs; inadequate donor support; and ineffective extension services were the dominant constraints farmers associations were facing in their activities.

TABLE 6: Distribution of Response by Constraints of Farmers Associations in the Study Area

	Mentions		
Constraints	EMs	NEMs	Total
Rebel War	55(16.9%)	55(16.2%)	110(16.6%)
Ebola Outbreak	55(13.8%)	55(14.2%)	110(16.6%)
Inadequate donor support	50(15.4%)	28(9.4%)	78(11.7%)
Inadequate and inappropriate farm inputs	50(15.4%)	28(8.3%)	78(11.7%)
Inadequate sensitization	5(1.5%)	48(14.2%)	53(7.9%)
Inability to access loan	55(16.9%)	55(16.2%)	110(16.6%)
Inability of some executive members to manage their associations	20(6.2%)	38(11.2%)	58(8.7%)
Untimely supply of inputs	55(16.9%)	55(16.2%)	110(16.6%)
Ineffective extension services	40 (12.3%)	28(8.3%)	68(10.2%)
Total	325(100.0%)	339(100.0)	664(100.0%)

DISCUSSION

1. Characteristics of Respondents

Various studies have shown that male predominantly participate in development programmes (Stavis, 1994; Sibanda, 1987). In this study, the majority of the respondents were males, indicating that male clientele are still the focus of development programmes. The percentages of these male executive and non-executive members participating in agricultural development were higher than women executive and non-executive members. According to Arusha (1990), the difference in gender participation could be due to difference in philosophy and programme emphasis. Foubert (1987) suggested that where there is a tendency for men to dominate participation in development programmes, conscious effort should be made to encourage women's participation. The proportion of female clientele (19.1%) participating in agricultural development programmes however was greater than that shown in the Agricultural Statistics Survey-2012/2013(about 6.0 percent) for the country(PEMDSU, 2013). The trend showed increase in women participation in development programmes. These findings indicated that the scenario in the country in general

and in the study area in particular is changing. The Chi-Squire test result showed that there was relationship between sex and participation in decision –making. The Agricultural Statistics Survey 2012/2013(SSL, 2013) reported that the mean age of 45years, as the cut-off point between young and old farmers. Bangura's (2012) study of farmers in Kambia and Kenema Districts Farmers Field School gave the average age of farmers to be 44.4 years. In this report, the average age of respondents participating in agricultural development programmes was 45 years. This result was almost the same as that reported in the Agricultural Statistics Survey 2012/2013, and the finding reported by Bangura (2012). The executive members tend to be older than the non-executive members. This finding tend lends support to the fact that age parameter allows natural pattern (with few exceptions), where leaders are older and experienced than the led. Ngegba's (2008) study of the effectiveness of NGO-led Food Security to recipient participation in development showed that majority of the participants of the NGO-led food security programmes were within economically productive age (24-40 years). It is therefore not surprising that most of the respondents in this study were married. Marital status in this study showed that most of the respondents were married, only a small number (5.5%) were unmarried. All of the executive members and a greater portion of non-executives were married. In fact, 50% of the single (unmarried) respondents were widows. This pattern suggested that marriage is still an important social institution in the study area. Marry is symbol of responsible social status, high-level of responsibility and acceptable moral behavior. Marriage confers status and responsibility.

The analytical Report of Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL, 2004) on housing and country Census reported that average household size of 6.6 for the country and 7.7 for the districts in the Northern Province. The average household size of respondents in this study area was 6.8. This average household size in this study area was higher than reported for the country, but less than the average household size reported for Districts in the Northern Province. Small household sizes were found in Chiefdoms and District headquarter town. This may have implication for labour requirement where farming is done using traditional tools. According to Moriba (2011), the predominance of Muslim is not peculiar to Port Loko District, but was a common feature in all rural areas of Sierra Leone. In this study, majority of the respondents (Executive and non-executive members) (80.0%) were Muslims and the rest (20.0%) were Christians. Chi-Squire Test result showed that religion had no significant influence on participation in decision-making in the study area. However, the time religious activities are performed need to be considered tin planning and implementation of development programmes, as it may affect the level of participation in the programmes. Ngegba (2008) showed that position holding by NGO-led security programme Beneficiaries impacted negatively on the level of decision making in rural food security organizations. The findings of this research showed that most of the respondents were (94.5%) interviewed did not hold any position in their communities. The (5.5%) who reported holding positions were executive members. The Chi-Squire test showed that there was no significant evidence of association between sex and position holding in farmers associations studied. The effectiveness of any development depended on the level of knowledge attained by the participants in the programmes (World Bank, 2001). But one common feature of rural areas of most developing countries is low level of education. The result of this study confirms this statement. The majority of the sample respondents (70.0%) did not receive formal education; the rest (30.0%) had received some formal education. Foubert (1987) in his study of Farmers Association in Sierra Leone revealed that although the main occupation in farm associations was farming, some were government employees, blacksmiths/ craftsmen and petty traders/business men. In this research, more than half of the respondents (67.3%) were involved in other occupations, but considered farming as their main occupations. Many studies (Stavis, 1994; Gellen, 1994) have shown that farmers associations have two main objectives: (1) to supply information to farmers and (2) to supply inputs. In this study, clientele interviewed confirmed evidence given above by these authors, in their farmers associations. Most of the members were however, unable to give a clear –cut relationship between the role and objectives of the associations. One salient finding by Stavis's (1994) study of local governance and agricultural development in Taiwan was that farmers associations were self–supporting. Most of the farmers associations comprised of supply, marketing and credit departments; and in some cases, insurance department. The farmers associations studied combined funds generated by themselves (internal source) with funds coming from outside (external source) to run the associations.

2.Organizational Management and nature of involvement of members in Farmers Association Activities

In his study, Stavis (1994) looked at farmers associations from to extremes: (1) farmers associations in rapidly growing industrial cities and (2) farmers associations in poor regions. In rapidly growing industrial cities, farmers associations became very wealthy through sales of their land for industrial use. Here a farmer association may one-six-storey air-conditioned building with private office room, meeting rooms, rooms for visitors and departmental rooms (credit, supply and marketing). Farmers associations in poor regions may be located in an old building with only one working room, skeletal staff of ten (10) and no separate offices inside. The findings of this study are consistent with Stavis's view of farmers associations in poor regions. Farmers associations in the study area do not have permanent staff to run the affairs of their association. They are located in dwelling house of their coordinators with no separate offices for the association. According to Needham, et al. (1995), clientele participation in development programmes can only be effective if the institutional and management environment permits and encourage the involvement of recipients in the various aspects of their administrative activities. Lele (1986) also found out that

rural organizations involved in agricultural development programmes are themselves social systems with predetermined structures and processes. The findings obtained in this research are in agreement with the findings of Needham (1995) and Lele (1980). According to Sandiford (1991) one of the best ways clientele get involved in development programmes was through attendance and participation in meetings. The findings of this study buttressed this view. Most of the clientele in this study attended management or general meetings or both. Absence from meeting, as reported, could only be due to ill health and absence clientele from the village or town. Participatory development is seen from the point of view of United Nations Volunteers and their Domestic Development Services (UNDP, 1991) as an upwards move of society, necessitating grassroots people (clientele) involvement in making decisions on matters affecting their well-being, in implementing programmes related to these decisions, in sharing the benefits of the programmes and in evaluating them. Brody (1984%) also observed that the pattern of decision –making with respect to, who takes the decision for who, has an important bearing on the nature of the involvement of the clientele in the activities of the programme. The result of this study is in accordance with some of the findings of UNDP and Brody. The findings revealed that issues are discussed at meetings, but the executive members at the end of the day took the decisions and expected the non-executive members to rubberstamp or collaborate and implement the decision. This showed that decision-making is top-down rather than bottom-top.

The active and direct involvement of clientele in their own development is largely affected by how the information flows through the hierarchical structure and what channels are used. Kerem *et al.* (1986) showed that interpersonal and informal communication channels are quite important in maintaining control over decision –making process. For effective decision making in planning and implementation of programmes, there is need to plan information flow, so as to ensure the exchange of ideas and resources between executive members and their clientele with an atmosphere of mutual respect. In this study, the letter, as a channel of information, was not very effective. Konteh (1997) argued that local organizations like farmers associations base their participation on universal standards and hence operate effectively with little or no formal interaction between members of the community. Lack of knowledge, skill and exposure to influence decision –making suggest were the possible reason for the ineffectiveness of these groups to participate in major decision-making processes (Konteh, 1997; Ashby, 1990). Participation in these organization was limited to making request; acceptance of proposals or decision and benefits sharing, hence did not operate effectively.

3.Factors affecting Participation of Clientele in Agricultural Development Programmes

According to Sowonie (1998), some of the factors that affect effectiveness of associations/group in facilitating participation in agricultural development programmes included: organizational and managerial factors of the associations, personal characteristics and cultural influence. Bangura (1989) considered rural development education, regular meetings, feelings of membership and encouragement as some factors that would affect clientele participation in agricultural development programmes. Blanckonburg (1984) study revealed that some development programmes impede participation of beneficiaries by setting resources contribution as pre-condition for enlistment in the projects activities. Konteh (1997) stated that the problems affecting the local organizations in Sierra Leone are largely rooted in structures and policies. He also emphasized the organization's lack of apparatus to guarantee efficiency and effectiveness in formulating and executing policies for development. There is also acute shortage of infrastructure and lack of skilled staff for local organizations. The findings of this study support those of Bangura, Blanckonburg and Conteh. The factors that affected the sample respondent's full participation were inadequate input supply, untimely and uneven distribution of inputs and bureaucracy involved in the sharing of agricultural inputs. A good number of the non-executive members reported that the personal interest of some executive members superseded that of the organization.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study clearly point at some of the inadequacies of farmers associations to effectively facilitate participation in agricultural development programmes on the other hand. These include organizational and management factors on one hand and inability of executive members to involve non-executive members in decision–making leading to low participation in agricultural development programmes. These factors would continue to make these farmers associations incapable of effectively producing desired results, realizing their goals, matching organizational capacity with clientele needs and facilitating members' participation in agricultural development programmes. Farmers associations are yet to develop structures that could allow effective participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The research pointed at high level of males and women still lagging behind their male counterparts in terms of enrolment and participation in farmers associations in the study area. Therefore, conscious effect must be made to encourage women participation in farmers associations.
2. The study revealed high proportion for the two categories (Executive and Non-executive members) not going to school. This would have implications for position holding and decision making in the farmers association. Therefore, adult functional literacy classes should be established for the farmers.
3. The main goal of farmers associations was to improve the standard of living of their members. To achieve this, goal, various activities such as income generation, agricultural production, input distribution, community development and skills training should be undertaken by

farmers associations. For farmers associations to operate effectively and efficiently they need resources, external and internal sources must be exploited, to ensure the sustainability associations, and the achievement of the various goals of these associations.

4. Organizational structures of farmers the farmers associations did not encourage participation of the members in decision –making and various aspects of their programmes. Information flowed from top to bottom and decisions are made at top, at executive level. For farmers associations to function well, linkage must be functional, top to bottom and bottom-top information flow must exist, non-bureaucratic tendencies that affect the implementation of the activities must be removed.
5. The effective involvement of clientele in agricultural development programmes through farmers associations as grassroots management structures required that members were empowered to take major decisions in both programmes planning and implementation would be done by the devolution of power to them, and the development of knowledge and skills of the executive members in such area as decision –making, group dynamics and programme management

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