

RURAL LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION AND INCOME INEQUALITY IN  
AKINYELE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, IBADAN, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** The pattern of income distribution has been a major concern in the developing world. This is because high levels of income inequality are likely to create a hostile atmosphere for economic growth and development. This study examined rural livelihood strategies and their contribution to the overall income inequality of households in Akinyele local government area of Oyo state. Primary data employed in the study were obtained from 105 respondents selected through a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, multinomial logit and the generalized entropy inequality indices as a measure of inequality. The distribution of respondents by type of livelihood strategy adopted revealed that almost half of the respondents adopted the combination of farm and non-farm strategy while 14.3% and 40.0% adopted only farm and non-farm strategy respectively. Income inequality was the highest among non-farming households and the lowest among farming households, implying that income from non-farm activities contributed most to income inequality in the study area. The study revealed that the major factor which negatively influenced the choice of farming as a livelihood strategy was household size while factors such as age and land ownership had positive and negative effects on the adoption of the non-farm strategy respectively. The study recommends that policies targeted at rural dwellers should centre on improved access to productive assets such as land for the landless farmers as well as the provision of improved technology, which could encourage the ageing farming population to engage in farming activities.

**Key words:** rural, livelihood diversification, income inequality, Oyo state.

### Introduction

Livelihood diversification refers to attempts by individuals and households to raise income and reduce environmental risk which differs sharply by the degree of freedom of choice (to diversify or not), and reversibility of the outcome (Hussein and Nelson, 1999). For rural households, it includes both on-farm and off-farm activities which are undertaken to generate income additional to that from the main

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household agricultural activities. This could be via the production of agricultural and non-agricultural goods and services, the sale of waged labor, or self-employment in small firms and other strategies undertaken to spread risk. The main driving forces of diversification are: to increase income when the resources needed for the main activities are too limited to provide a sufficient means of livelihood (Minot et al., 2006), to reduce income risks in the face of missing insurance market (Barrett et al., 2001), to exploit strategic complementarities and positive interactions between different activities and to earn cash income and finance investment in the face of credit failures (Ruben and Van den Berg, 2001).

In developing countries, a move away from the agricultural sector to industry is expected to improve the distribution of income by increasing the income of low-earning groups while an increase in the relative productivity of agriculture is expected to reduce income disparities by increasing the income of those employed in this sector (Topalova, 2007). However, though diversification via non-agricultural means provides 20 percent to 45 percent of full time employment and 30 percent to 50 percent of rural household income in Africa (Babatunde and Qaim, 2009), little is known about the impact of such activities on the distribution of income and consequently, inequality.

In Nigeria, despite the rapid economic growth experienced between 1965 and 1974, income disparity has widened substantially. Policy interventions have proved futile as the level of income inequality before and after implementation of the policies showed that income inequality worsened (Oyekale et al., 2004). Further, according to the Nigerian poverty profile 2010 report, while income inequality rose from 0.429 in 2004 to 0.447 in 2010, poverty incidences were 28.1, 46.3, 65.6, 58.3 and 69 percent in 1980, 1985, 1996, 2005 and 2010 respectively (World Bank, 1996; IMF, 2005; NBS, 2010). This is expected as income inequality is almost always associated with higher levels of poverty, owing to the fact that a smaller share of income will be obtained by those at the bottom of the income distribution (McKay, 2002). As a result of the linkage between income inequality and poverty, reducing income inequality has become a major public policy challenge among development agencies and poverty reduction experts. Yet, in most developing countries, discussions about poverty reduction strategies often focus almost exclusively on income growth, neglecting the potential roles of income redistribution and inequality (UNU/WIDER, 2000). Most of the discussions often fail to recognize that, to achieve reduction in poverty, income growth has to be equitably distributed. Hence, the high incidence of poverty experienced in the country over the last two decades and the impact of the incidence becomes a critical development issue as a result of the high levels of inequality associated with even low levels of household income and expenditure. It is worthy of note that the variations are not just among households but also among different regions of the country (Aigbokhan, 1997).

The poor in Nigeria are not just the rich with less money, but are the poorest of the poor. Households are not only poor; they also suffer from vast inequality in incomes, in assets (including education and health status), in control over public resources, and in access to essential services as well as pervasive insecurity (World Bank, 2000). This situation threatens growth, poverty reduction targets and consequently hinders development in the country. Over the years, agriculture in Nigeria has accounted for the highest incidence of poverty. With a population of over 170 million and the fact that the majority of the poor still reside in rural areas and rely very substantially on income from agriculture, households have resulted to diversification of their livelihoods. Households (especially the rural poor) engage in multiple livelihood activities such as trading (marketing or adding value to commodities), small scale business enterprises (carpentry, radio and bicycle repairs) and processing of agricultural goods and arts and craft (weaving, mats and basket making) in order to supplement earnings from agriculture to cope with increasing vulnerability associated with agricultural production (Ekong, 2003; Matthews-Njoku and Adesope, 2007), as well as to enable them to generate an adequate and secure standard of living. In the past, it was often believed that agriculture on its own could achieve this goal primarily by raising agricultural productivity continuously over time and also by redressing issues of access to key resources such as land by land tenure reform and other devices. It has become apparent, however, that agriculture on its own often cannot provide the means of escaping poverty for the majority of the rural poor (Ellis, 2000).

A number of studies have shown that rural households in the sub-Saharan Africa derive their income from different sources with non-agricultural activities accounting for a substantial share of total income (Ellis, 2000). The existing gaps in poverty in the urban and rural sectors in the sub-Saharan Africa have therefore attracted the attention of social scientists to the study of rural livelihoods (Nasa et al., 2010). Despite the growing attention being focused on diversification, there is still no general agreement about the impact of these income sources on inequality (Adams, 2001). Similarly, the general belief that income inequality is closely related to poverty and that poverty and inequality are more wide-spread and prevalent in rural than urban areas (IFAD, 2001) justifies the conduct of an in-depth analysis of rural income inequality. This is with the aim of identifying the incomes from various livelihood diversification strategies that contribute more to overall inequality. It therefore provides useful insights for poverty alleviation programmes especially in rural areas of Nigeria, where poverty rates are disproportionately high. However, studies on effect of livelihood diversification on income inequality among rural households have received little attention in the development economics literature in Nigeria, therefore this study attempts to fill the gap. An understanding of the link between livelihood diversification and income inequality as well as the contribution of each income source to total

inequality in the study area will in turn assist policy makers in the efficient allocation of resources among different earning groups in the design of various poverty reduction programmes. Consequently, this study seeks to address the following questions: what are the various types of livelihood strategies adopted, what are the factors influencing the type of livelihood strategy adopted, and what are the effects of different livelihood sources on overall income inequality in the study area?

### Material and Methods

This study was conducted in Akinyele local government area of Oyo state. It occupies a land area of 462.892 square km and has a total population of 211,359 people (NPC, 2006). It is 120 m above sea level and has the West African Monsoon climate. The rainfall season is from March to October while dry season is from November to February. The vegetation pattern is central rainforest with a mean annual temperature of 26.6°C while the major types of livelihood activities in this area include farming, trading and government employment.

Primary data used in this study were collected from representative households using a multi-stage sampling technique. The first stage was the random selection of Akinyele local government area (LGA) out of the 11 LGAs that make up Ibadan metropolis. The second stage involved the random selection of four wards out of the 12 wards in the LGA while the third stage involved the selection of representative households based on the size of the wards in the local government. Consequently, a random sample of 120 households was selected, out of which only 105 households gave complete information required. Hence, these 105 households constituted the sample size for the study.

Analytical techniques employed include descriptive statistics, the generalized entropy inequality indices and the multinomial logit regression model. Descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, percentages and means were used to analyze respondents' socio-economic characteristics and the type of livelihood strategy adopted by rural households while the generalized entropy (GE) inequality indices were used to examine the effect of livelihood strategies as well as other socio-economic characteristics on income inequality among respondents. This is owing to the fact that inequality measures of the GE class are all decomposable into intuitively appealingly components of within- and between-group inequality (Cowell, 2000). The general formula of members of the GE class of inequality measures is as follows:

$$GE(\alpha) = \frac{1}{\alpha^2 - \alpha} = \left[ \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \left( \frac{y_i}{\mu} \right)^\alpha - 1 \right] \quad (1)$$

where:

$n$  = Number of individuals in the sample;

$y_i$  = Income variable of the household head;

$y_2$  = Gender variable of the household head;  
 $y_3$  = Age group of the household head;  
 $y_4$  = Educational attainment of household head;  
 $y_5$  = Land ownership;  
 $\mu$  = Sample mean of variable.

The parameter  $\alpha$  represents the weight given to the distances between income variables at different parts of the income distribution, and can take any real value. For lower values of  $\alpha$ , GE is more sensitive to low-end inequality changes; for higher values, GE is more sensitive to middle-end and upper-end inequality changes.

$\alpha = 0$ ; for low-end inequality;  
 $\alpha = 1$ ; for middle-end inequality;  
 $\alpha = 2$ ; for high-end inequality.

The multinomial logit regression was used to analyze the factors influencing the livelihood strategy adopted by representative households. The model is specified below as:

$$P_{r(L_i=j)} = \frac{\exp(X_i \beta_j)}{\sum_{j=0}^J \exp(X_i \beta_j)} \quad j = 0 \dots 2 \quad (2)$$

$L_i$  represents 3 unordered categories of rural livelihood strategy;

$L_1$  = those who adopt Farm strategy alone;

$L_2$  = those who adopt Non-farm strategy alone;

$L_0$  = those who adopt a combination of Farm and Non-farm strategy;

where  $L_0$  is the reference case.

The independent variables are:

$X_1$  = Age of the respondents in years;

$X_2$  = Gender of household head (male=1, 0 if otherwise);

$X_3$  = Education (formal education=1, 0 if otherwise);

$X_4$  = Primary occupation of household head (farming=1, 0 if otherwise);

$X_5$  = Number of spouse(s);

$X_6$  = Household size;

$X_7$  = Land ownership (own land=1, 0 if otherwise).

## Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents some selected socio-economic characteristics of respondents. The mean age of respondents in the study area was 46.4 years which implies that majority of the respondents were in their economically active age. Most of the respondents had one form of formal education or the other with majority having primary education. Also, about four-fifths of the respondents were married with an average household size of 8 members per household.

Table 1. Selected socio-economic characteristics of respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Age (in years)</i>		
≤35	22	21.0
36–45	27	25.7
46–55	34	32.3
56–65	16	15.3
>65	6	15.7
Total	105	100.0
Mean	46.4	
SD	11.4	
<i>Educational status</i>		
No formal education	12	11.5
Primary	49	46.6
Secondary	35	33.3
Tertiary	9	8.6
Total	105	100.0
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	1	1.0
Married	84	80.0
Widowed	9	8.5
Separated/Divorced	11	10.5
Total	100	100.0
<i>Household size</i>		
1–4	20	19.0
5–8	44	42.0
9–12	29	27.5
13–16	9	8.6
17–20	3	2.9
Total	105	100.0
Mean	7.8	
SD	3.5	
<i>Method of land acquisition</i>		
No land	24	22.9
Inheritance	44	41.9
Tenancy	16	15.2
Leasehold	4	3.8
Gift	4	3.8
Purchase	13	12.4
Total	105	100.0
<i>Livelihood strategy adopted</i>		
Farm	15	14.3
Non-farm	42	40.0
Farm & Non-farm	48	45.7
Total	105	100.0
<i>Monthly income (₦)</i>		
0–10,000	11	10.5
10,000–20,000	14	13.3
20,000–30,000	38	44.5
>30,000	42	31.7
Total	105	100.0
Mean	23,083.00	
SD	10,413.00	

Source: Field survey, 2011.

With respect to the method of land acquisition, results indicated that the majority of the respondents acquired land mainly through inheritance and tenancy. Results further showed that a greater proportion of the respondents adopted a combination of farm and non-farm strategy as their source of livelihood. The mean monthly income of respondents stood at ₦23,083.

Literature has shown that household livelihood activities are influenced by both internal and external factors (Ellis, 2001; Morduch and Sicular, 2002; Ibekwe et al., 2010). Such factors include: age, gender of household heads, years of education, number of spouse(s), household size and land ownership among others.

Table 2 presents the result of the multinomial logit regression analysis of the determinants of livelihood strategies adopted by households in Akinyele Local Government area of Oyo State. The significant pseudo  $R^2$  value of 0.4092 indicates that the model is well fitted. Marginal effects results of the regression presented showed that a unit increase in household size reduced the likelihood of adopting farm strategy by 0.178 relative to the adoption of the combination of both farming and non-farm strategy. In other words, the larger the household, the lower is the tendency to opt for farm livelihood strategy.

Table 2. Factors influencing the choice of livelihood strategy adopted.

Variables	Farm		Non-farm	
	dy/dx	Z-statistics	dy/dx	Z-statistics
Age	-0.723	-1.35	0.105	1.90*
Age squared	0.001	1.44	-0.001	-1.88*
Gender	-0.039	-0.49	-0.013	-0.12
Years of education	-0.006	-0.40	0.009	0.58
No. of spouse(s)	0.115	1.16	-0.181	-1.07
Household size	-0.178	-2.22**	0.055	1.20
Land ownership	0.204	1.21	-0.239	-2.36**
Constant	6.752	1.30	-10.668	-1.77*

Source: Regression result, 2011. Note: \*significant at 10%, \*\*significant at 5%. Number of observations = 105; Log likelihood = 62.176; LR chi sq = 86.14; Pseudo  $R^2$  = 0.4092; Prob > chi sq = 0.0000.

This finding is consistent with the findings of Harjes (2007) in which an increase in household size increased the likelihood of non-adoption of farming as a livelihood strategy. With respect to age, a positive and significant coefficient of 0.105 suggests that a year increase in the age of the household head will lead to an increase in the likelihood of adopting the non-farm strategy by 0.105 relative to the combination of both farming and non-farm strategy. Hence, the older the household heads are, the higher is their likelihood of adopting the non-farm livelihood strategy. This finding corroborates the findings of Jacobs (2000) in which older household heads left the labour intensive jobs to the younger ones and

adopted easier jobs. The coefficient of square of age was however negative but significant implying that the effect of age on the adoption of non-farm strategy weakens with time. Similarly, the coefficient of land ownership of -0.239 indicates that households that own land are less likely to adopt non-farm strategy relative to the adoption of a combination of non-farm and farming as a livelihood strategy. This is expected as the most important resource in farming is land. In summary, the major factors affecting the adoption of non-farm strategy in the study area were the age of the household head and land ownership while the only factor affecting the adoption of farm strategy as a livelihood option in the study area was household size.

The effect of livelihood diversification as well as other socio-economic characteristics of the respondents on income inequality is presented in Table 3. Results indicated that among the low, middle and high income earners, income inequality was the highest among non-farming households and the lowest among farming households.

Table 3. Effect of livelihood diversification on income inequality.

Variables	GE Index ( $\alpha=0$ )	GE Index ( $\alpha=1$ )	GE Index ( $\alpha=2$ )
<i>Livelihood strategies</i>			
Farm	0.029	0.030	0.031
Non-farm	0.082	0.082	0.088
Farm and non-farm	0.059	0.057	0.056
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	0.078	0.080	0.089
Female	0.042	0.040	0.039
<i>Age (years)</i>			
<35	0.050	0.051	0.055
36–45	0.042	0.041	0.043
46–55	0.089	0.085	0.087
56–65	0.037	0.035	0.034
>65	0.038	0.037	0.036
<i>Educational attainment</i>			
No formal education	0.032	0.025	0.022
Primary	0.049	0.051	0.055
Secondary	0.087	0.084	0.088
Tertiary	0.055	0.059	0.067
<i>Land ownership</i>			
No land	0.061	0.057	0.056
Own land	0.068	0.069	0.076

GE = generalized entropy. Source: Field survey, 2011.

This implies that income from non-farm activities contributed more to income inequality than any other livelihood strategy and could be attributed to the fact that non-farm activities yield higher returns than farm activities. As a result, there is

high income disparity among the households engaged in non-farm activities. This result is however contrary to the findings of Adebayo (2002) in which agricultural income contributed most to overall income inequality in Ibadan Metropolis. With respect to gender, inequality was higher among male headed households than among their female counterparts for the three indices. The distribution of inequality by age revealed that inequitable distribution of income was more prevalent among individuals aged 46 to 55 years and the lowest among household heads aged 56 to 65 years for the three income groups. This could be attributed to the fact that the majority of the household heads in the study area were within their economically active age and as a result were more likely to earn higher income. This suggests that there are varying degrees of access to factors of production among household heads within the age group of 46 and 55 years than those in other age groups. With respect to the educational attainment of household heads, income inequality was the highest among households whose heads had secondary education, followed by heads with tertiary education and the lowest among households whose heads had no formal education for the three indices. This indicates that household heads with secondary education contributed most to income inequality while household heads with no formal education contributed the least to income inequality. Further, income inequality was found to be high among respondents that do not own land but higher among respondents that own land especially among the high income earners. This suggests that land ownership does not explain much of the income inequality in the study area.

### **Conclusion**

Income inequality results in poverty, discontent, violence and corruption among other vices. Therefore, as part of the microeconomic objectives of governments, priority should be given to the equitable distribution of income for there to be any meaningful development in the country. To achieve this goal, the study on the effect of livelihood diversification on income distribution is very pertinent as it brings to the fore the effect of livelihood activities on income inequality. It also explains the relationship that exists between socio-economic characteristics and the adoption of different livelihood strategies. This study has revealed that among low, middle and high income earning households in the study area, there were high disparities in income distribution of male-headed households aged 46 to 55 years and those engaged in non-farm activities. Also, income was more inequitably distributed among household heads with secondary education and high income households that own land. While the major factor influencing the choice of farming as a livelihood strategy was household size, factors such as age and land ownership influenced the adoption of the non-farm livelihood strategy. Based on these findings, the study recommends that policies targeted at rural

dwellers should centre on improved access to productive assets such as land for the landless farmers as well as the provision of improved technology, which could encourage the ageing farming population to continuously engage in farming activities.

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DIVERZIFIKACIJA SREDSTAVA ZA ŽIVOT KOD SEOSKOG  
STANOVNIŠTVA I NEJEDNAKOST DOHOTKA U OBLASTI LOKALNE  
UPRAVE AKINJELE, IBADAN, DRŽAVA OJO, NIGERIJA

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R e z i m e

Obrazac raspodele dohotka je glavna briga u zemljama u razvoju. Iz tog razloga verovatno je da visoki nivoi nejednakosti dohotka stvaraju nepovoljnu atmosferu za ekonomski rast i razvoj. Ovaj rad ispituje strategije obezbeđivanja sredstava za život seoskog stanovništva i njihov doprinos celokupnoj nejednakosti dohotka domaćinstava u oblasti lokalne uprave Akinjele, države Ojo. Primarni podaci koji su korišćeni u ovom istraživanju su dobijeni od 105 ispitanika koji su odabrani putem tehnike višestepenog uzorkovanja. Podaci su analizirani korišćenjem deskriptivne statistike, multinominalnog logit modela i indeksa nejednakosti generalizovane entropije kao mere nejednakosti. Distribucija ispitanika prema tipu usvojene strategije obezbeđivanja sredstava za život je otkrila da je gotovo polovina ispitanika usvojila kombinaciju poljoprivredne i nepoljoprivredne strategije, dok je 14,3% i 40,0% ispitanika respektivno usvojilo poljoprivrednu odnosno nepoljoprivrednu strategiju. Nejednakost dohotka je bila najviša među nepoljoprivrednim domaćinstvima, a najmanja među poljoprivrednim domaćinstvima, ukazujući na to da dohodak od nepoljoprivrednih aktivnosti najviše doprinosi stvaranju nejednakosti dohotka u ispitivanoj oblasti. Istraživanje je pokazalo da je glavni faktor koji negativno utiče na izbor poljoprivrede kao strategije za obezbeđivanje sredstava za život veličina domaćinstva, dok faktori kao što su starosna dob i vlasništvo nad zemljištem imaju respektivno pozitivne odnosno negativne uticaje na usvajanje nepoljoprivredne strategije. Istraživanje preporučuje da bi politike umerene na ruralno stanovništvo trebalo da se usredsrede na poboljšanje pristupa osnovnim proizvodnim sredstvima kao što je zemljište za poljoprivrednike koji ga ne poseduju, kao i na obezbeđivanje poboljšane tehnologije, koja bi ohrabrila stariju poljoprivrednu populaciju da se uključi u poljoprivredne aktivnosti.

**Ključne reči:** seoski, diverzifikacija sredstava za život, nejednakost dohotka, država Ojo.

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