



CONTEXTUALIZING RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE POVERTY ALLEVIATION: THE ROLE OF METREDS IN NIGER DELTA REGION

¹Marcus Friday Ovovwero Ekure, ²Russell Avre, ³Fatima O. Oyeleye

¹University of Strathclyde Business School, Glasgow G4 0QU, United Kingdom

²Greensprings Digital University, Yaoundé, RH7H+6H9, Nkolafamba, Cameroon

³University of Strathclyde Business School, Glasgow G4 0QU, United Kingdom

Author's email:

¹Email: marcusekure@gmail.com

²Email : Russellavre@yahoo.com

³Email: ibiseun1@gmail.com

Abstract

Rural entrepreneurship stands as a recognised solution to achieve economic expansion and poverty reduction within low-income rural contexts. Numerous rural communities within Nigeria's Niger Delta region encounter substantial socio-economic obstacles because they lack financial resources and poor infrastructure, as well as a lack of proper business training programs. This research analysis evaluates the Mobile Empowerment Train Rural Entrepreneurship Development Strategy (MeTrEds), which functions as a community-based grassroots model to support rural entrepreneurship development while fighting poverty at its roots. The research utilises both qualitative ethnographic data obtained from MeTrEds participants through an ethnographic approach, alongside quantitative survey data collected from 380 entrepreneurs distributed across 48 communities. Research data shows that the MeTrEds program has achieved remarkable results in business sustainability and financial literacy while generating higher income for participants, which led to increased revenues and business expansion through the efforts of over 70% who took part in the program. The statistical analysis from regression shows that business survival, along with financial independence and access to funding, demonstrates significant correlations with MeTrEds participation. This research indicates that grassroots capacity-establishing efforts prove successful for creating permanent economic independence among rural business operators. MeTrEds surpasses conventional government-led initiatives because it uses neighbourhood-based training together with peer guidance systems and assistance that makes it more available and effective. The research results support scholarly analysis about rural entrepreneurship alongside poverty alleviation and the Capability Approach while demonstrating the value of self-directed economic strengthening schemes in poverty-stricken areas.

Keywords: Rural Entrepreneurship, Poverty Alleviation, Business Sustainability, Capacity Building, Grassroots Development, Niger Delta, MeTrEds

Introduction

Although it holds substantial oil and natural gas resources contributing over 95 per cent to export earnings and over 40 per cent to national GDP, the Niger Delta region faces persistent socioeconomic deprivation, which places the area among the least developed parts of the

country (Ukhurebor et al., 2021). Oil extraction activities throughout multiple decades in the region resulted in environmental destruction, which caused traditional resources to vanish and provoked economic instability (Babatunde, 2023). Many communities in the region face extreme poverty, with limited access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and financial support (Umar et al., 2021). The elevated employment deficit between the youth and women populations has magnified social challenges that subsequently increased criminal activities and militant and restless behaviours.



Figure 1: *The Mobile Empowerment Train Rural Entrepreneurship Development Strategy (MeTrEds)*

The Mobile Empowerment Train Rural Entrepreneurship Development Strategy (MeTrEds), as shown in Figure 1, functions as an entrepreneurship-enabling program configured to boost rural entrepreneurship development across the Niger Delta region (Agbonifo, 2022). The training platform, MeTrEds, functions as an active mobile program which delivers mentorship and entrepreneurial education through on-site workshops to communities that need development support (Kumar et al., 2021). Barefoot Economics provides the base for this model to create economic solutions at the grassroots level, which match the unique needs of underserved communities. Treating rural entrepreneurs since its establishment, MeTrEds has shaped the lives of multiple thousands who now practice sustainable business development in the region.



Figure 2: *MeTreds Awareness Session*

Despite its economic potential and overall relevance to the Nigerian economy, the region where the Niger Delta resides remains economically disadvantaged because it experiences substantial poverty rates and limited employment opportunities, together with worsening environmental conditions (Babatunde et al., 2024). The dominance of oil revenue has resulted in systematic abandonment of agricultural development along with small enterprise growth within the region (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Many rural areas minimise their potential for productive entrepreneurial ventures because they receive limited access to capital and inadequate infrastructure and scarce training possibilities. The Niger Delta region has received no long-term sustainable results through traditional poverty reduction initiatives directed by the Nigerian government (Samuel, 2021). These programs implement short-term cash assistance instead of teaching practical job-based skills with enduring mentorship, thus making the recipients stay dependent on additional support (Ogunjuyigbe et al., 2021). Consequently, the success of such programs deteriorates further due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, together with corruption and an absence of community participation. The rising need exists for different approaches to development which emphasise community involvement and the development of local abilities and grassroots business initiatives (Ogunjuyigbe et al., 2021).



Figure 3: Illustration Depicting the Provision of Certificates to the Participants of MeTred



This research targets this disciplinary vacancy through the evaluation of MeTrEds' effect on rural business creation, together with poverty reduction efforts across the Niger Delta region. The study centres on capacity enhancement and mentoring together with community-level engagement because they provide concrete proof about using locally oriented strategies to achieve lasting economic improvements for disenfranchised populations.

Literature Review

Rural entrepreneurship stands separate from urban entrepreneurship because rural areas deal with restricted resources, together with restricted access to markets and limited infrastructure (Adewumi & Keyser, 2020). The rural business environment poses distinct obstacles to these entrepreneurs through consumer financial limitations and restricted service access, together with technological disadvantages (Osunmuyiwa & Ahlborg, 2022). The research shows that rural entrepreneurs start businesses out of necessity since survival drives them more than pursuing business opportunities (Rytönen & Oghazi, 2022). Local economic development (LED) initiatives are vital for poverty reduction because they provide three core assets to rural entrepreneurs through capacity-building programs as well as microfinance schemes and business incubation centres, according to Aguilar (2022). Under LED strategies, community involvement drives development through multiple forms of assistance, including business training and mentoring, as well as financial tools that enable business enlargement (Ben-Hafaiedh et al., 2024).



Figure 4: *Provision of Training Program to the Participants*

Across developing nations, the contribution of entrepreneurship toward poverty alleviation appears through multiple microfinance programs and dilletante training schemes. Rural entrepreneurs become economically independent according to Ghouse, Durrah and McElwee (2021) through proper training and support from institutions, thus achieving sustainable poverty reduction. MeTrEds represents an effective incorporation of Local Economic Development concepts in rural Nigeria because it provides entrepreneurial training through mobile outreach operations, which minimises access barriers.

Multiple environmental barriers, along with inadequate infrastructure and socio-economic factors, delay the growth of rural entrepreneurship in the Niger Delta region (Padilla-Angulo & Garcia-Cabrera, 2022). The oil extraction industry, together with gas flaring activities, has inflicted severe environmental damage on the Niger Delta region, according to Shittu and Ogunsola (2023). From land contamination have emerged multiple issues that include biodiversity losses and agricultural production decreases, which historically sustained rural economies through agricultural means. Numerous rural entrepreneurs who depend on fishing, farming, and agro-processing have difficulty reaching their objectives because of environmentally damaged water sources, substandard farmland, and dwindling fish populations (Kimmitt, Muñoz and Newbery, 2020). The environmental challenges work to restrict business prospects while deepening poverty, which ends up creating a complex situation for entrepreneurial ventures.

Youth unemployment, coupled with gender disparities as well as financial obstacles, impede rural entrepreneurship development (Barcena-Martin et al., 2021). The financial institutions of Nigeria demand both security deposits and high-cost lending terms that rural business owners who are young and female cannot manage to pay (Nnamani, Ekekwe and Chukwu, 2023). Business literacy deficits combined with financial illiteracy stop rural entrepreneurs from effectively utilising loan options while risking their businesses effectively (Candelario-Moreno & Sánchez-Hernández, 2024; Egbe, 2025). The current models of entrepreneurship need replacement with initiatives that base their operations on community collaboration and local participation for development.



Figure 5: Illustration Depending the Training Program - MeTrEds

The Mobile Empowerment Train Rural Entrepreneurship Development Strategy (MeTrEds) evolved in 2023, from the UPYA Mobile Empowerment Train program, which was established in 2017, through a collaboration between Global Reform Crusaders Network (GRCN), Glappy Foundation and other non-governmental organisations. MeTrEds serves as a community-focused entrepreneurship enabling program for rural entrepreneurship development and economic rearmament in the Niger Delta region. The MeTrEds training platform operates through a mobile system by conducting practical education programs and skill development courses while providing business mentoring services to different communities (Odesa et al., 2024). As a strategic partner, the Glappy Foundation played a pivotal role in the implementation of MeTrEds by providing essential resources and support, thereby contributing to the program's success in fostering rural entrepreneurship and alleviating poverty in alignment with its African Dream of economic empowerment and self-sufficiency.



Figure 6: Mentoring Session Given to the Participants

MeTrEds Rural Entrepreneurship Propagation (MeTREP) helps communities gain funding opportunities alongside mentorship and enables business growth through its support programs. The model derives from Max-Neef's Barefoot Economics approach that advocates for community-based economic solutions together with the empowerment of underprivileged sociocultural strata (Max-Neef, 1992). The conventional requirement for participants to travel to urban centres does not exist in MeTrEds because it delivers training right to the people, thus enhancing accessibility as well as minimising logistical obstacles.

MeTrEds distinguishes itself from typical entrepreneurial programs operated by the government through its unique characteristics (Rembulan et al., 2023). The mobile community-oriented approach of MeTrEds enables accessibility for rural populations who typically lack such opportunities through its bottom-up operation. MeTrEds modifies its instruction based on local conditions to provide entrepreneurs with operational advice that directly benefits their business operations. The sustainability together with self-sufficiency represents a fundamental difference between MeTrEds (Gitelman & Kozhevnikov, 2023).



Figure 7: Participants of MeTrEds taking Training and Mentoring Sessions for becoming Economically Independent Entrepreneurs

MeTrEds targets individual capacities through training and mentorship to help entrepreneurs become economically independent after receiving external assistance through government initiatives. The peer-based learning structure of MeTrEds enables community members to pass on knowledge, which strengthens local entrepreneurial systems, while regular initiatives have limited success in this area (Gitelman & Kozhevnikov, 2023). Community-based entrepreneurial training programs establish better outcomes for business success when they deliver localised mentorship that enables entrepreneurs to handle economic obstacles (McMillan, 2017).

MeTrEds established its successful operations across the Niger Delta area starting from its initial launch. Direct training sessions provided over 10,000 rural entrepreneurs from 53 communities, enabling them to launch businesses which can continue indefinitely (Alekseieva et al., 2023). Depending on their success, the new businesses have strengthened local economies through job creation and higher household earnings as well as decreased rural-urban economic migration (Alekseieva et al., 2023).



Figure 8: Training Sessions given to Rural Entrepreneurs to Strengthened Local Economies

The main impact of MeTrEds emerges through its support for business sustainability, combined with financial independence. Results from beneficiary surveys showed that 70% of participants noticed positive impacts on their business sustainability while gaining the ability to expand their operations using their earnings. Statistics confirm that MeTrEds membership results in substantial and statistically valid poverty reduction over time (Omojimite, 2011). Through its strategy of financial literacy, along with business management training and mentorship, MeTrEds creates a powerful grassroots model that successfully resolves sustained economic problems in the Niger Delta region.

Theoretical Framework

Capability Approach

Economic empowerment and poverty alleviation depend on individual capabilities according to the Capability Approach, which Amartya Sen developed (Rauhut & Hatti, 2021). Economic development measures require more than income levels because they should evaluate how well individuals operate and how they access prospects for a better quality of life, according to Sen

(1999). This conceptual model has value within rural entrepreneurship due to its essential support for professional training, personal initiative, and resource accessibility that enables economic advancement. MeTrEds operates under the Capability Approach principles by providing rural entrepreneurs with relevant entrepreneurial and vocational skills, along with financial understanding, coupled with mentorship services to build their independence (Fan, 2023). The program enables economic self-mastery so people can manage their future financial objectives instead of depending on outside support. Such theoretical principles validate how educational development projects create substantial poverty relief impacts in areas with limited resources.

Barefoot Economics

Max-Neef in 1991 introduced Barefoot Economics as a method for creating economic programs which respond to the particular needs of disadvantaged communities (Gasper, 2022). These economic models combat standardisation of economic programs across multiple communities because they insist on adopting solutions that emerge from local conditions and community involvement (Gasper, 2023). The mobile and adaptable training format of the MeTrEds model demonstrates Barefoot Economics principles, which deliver entrepreneurial development to rural communities. The method allows people to learn through practical training experiences where local wisdom is combined with cultural understandings rather than using established institutional training systems (Barbera, 2022). The implemented method successfully creates sustainable entrepreneurship that benefits the Niger Delta region.



Figure 9: Illustration Depicting Adaptable Training Format

Methodology

The evaluation of MeTrEds' influence on Niger Delta rural entrepreneurship development combined ethnographic qualitative methods with quantitative survey data collection. The research selected a mixed methods design for complete program effect analysis because this method brought together the entrepreneurial experiences of participants alongside quantitative data measurements. The qualitative methods first depended on ethnographic observation

techniques and extensive interviews to extract participants' real-life MeTrEds experiences. Research surveys and statistical testing were used with survey questionnaires to establish generalizable research findings and confirm the quantitative analysis results. Green Entrepreneurship research shows that both interpretive and empirical methods create a complete understanding of program results.

Semi-structured interview sessions were carried out with MeTrEds beneficiaries alongside policy makers and entrepreneurship trainers selected purposefully. The interview process examined three main areas about capacity-building outcomes and business sustainability obstacles together with financial support opportunities. Guided discussions were organized with groups of entrepreneurs who participated in the MeTrEds training. The discussions enabled participants to learn from each other while they explored both advantages and drawbacks associated with the program.



Figure 10: Illustration Depicting Volunteers' Support in the MeTrEds program

Survey questionnaires with standardized formats were distributed to MeTrEds program participants operating as rural entrepreneurs in the quantitative research stage. Business performance along with income levels and entrepreneurial sustainability served as target areas for evaluation in the survey among trained participants. Sustained business operations together with profitable revenues and job growth marked the primary success indicators as did educational levels of financial competency. Participants in the survey were randomly sampled from operational communities under MeTrEds. Both pre-training evaluations and post-training evaluations included in the survey design help boost the survey's data validity. The study measured quantitative data using Likert-scale questions together with open-ended responses to enable scientific analysis of participant reports.

The researcher applied purposive sampling for collecting qualitative data by selecting participants from MeTrEds training programs. The selected methodology ensured valuable information came from all three target groups which included entrepreneurs and their respective stakeholders and training professionals. The qualitative research encompassed both established business owners and individuals new to entrepreneurship and members from the community to obtain various insights. A stratified random sampling method delivered the

quantitative survey results. The study recruited participants from various locations which received MeTrEds training to obtain an adequate number of rural business owners. A large pool of over 500 entrepreneurs provided the research with sufficient data for extensive statistical evaluation.

The researcher utilised thematic analysis for their qualitative data assessment because this method allows analysts to track textual patterns and their meanings. NVivo software served to transcribe and code interview records as well as focus group transcripts. Research identified key themes about entrepreneurial conduct and business development together with financial empowerment development. Staff members conducted qualitative examination of ethnographic observations to link training experiences with business results. The researcher used regression analysis together with hypothesis testing to determine if MeTrEds influenced rural entrepreneurship statistically. The research evaluated the statistical relation between MeTrEds learning attendance and business performance results including increased revenue and job creation and enterprise survival rates. A reliability test measured the consistency of responses in the survey during an initial stage of assessment. A post-regression diagnostic evaluation occurred to confirm the fitness of the statistical models as well as to reduce potential interpretation biases.

All steps during the study prioritized ethical considerations which safeguarded participant rights as well as promoted responsible research processes. Respondents received all necessary study information including the research objectives as well as procedures together with potential risks before they could participate. Each participant approved the study by providing written and spoken consent. Protection of privacy was achieved through complete confidentiality practices which included anonymous handling of participants' identities in all research outputs. The project applied password-protected storage systems along with other data security measures which functioned to stop unauthorized personnel from accessing the information. The researcher focused additional attention on vulnerable rural entrepreneurs by safeguarding them from any adverse impact that participation in the study could cause. During their research activities researcher took care to respect the traditional values of the local communities.



Figure 11: Promotional Efforts Conducted for Entrepreneurs in MeTrEds Program

Results

Qualitative Findings

Entrepreneurs' Experiences Before and After Participating in MeTrEds

Most rural business owners from the Niger Delta region endured multiple obstacles like restricted financial options and poor business education and minimal access to markets before MeTrEds (Dal Bello et al., 2022). An ethnographic analysis and interview research showed most entrepreneurial operations remained sustainably basic because entrepreneurs depended on irregular sales while using traditional market knowledge and unpredictable streams of income (Dal Bello et al., 2022). The participants displayed doubts about traditional business practices since several people believed borrowing money from institutions carried cultural risks (Afolabi and Ojo, 2023). The participants underwent a substantial change following their enrolment in MeTrEds training. The training improved the understanding of entrepreneurs regarding strategic business practices alongside market influence and customer management systems (Obuene et al., 2024). The participants evolved from their previous casual trading activities into established registered enterprises because MeTrEds training strengthened both their financial abilities along with business confidence. One participant shared:

My business was practically dead until MeTrEds showed up in my village and taught me new skills that turned my business around. – Ruona, 18 (NRE 10).

Small business owners mentioned that they learned to enhance their business approaches between themselves and their clients:

I have been so careless about my business and have never been serious with the demands of my customers until MeTrEds taught me the importance of consistency and effective customer relationships. – Gbanire, 62 (NRE 3)

Women entrepreneurs received the most significant benefit from MeTrEds since the program helped them gain complete financial autonomy. Ochuko, 38, noted:

I have three local women assisting me in production who work for me, and I pay 15,000 naira weekly” Ochuko, 38, Okorodafe (NRE 1)

The Role of Community-Based Interventions in Fostering Entrepreneurship

The research established that involving the community proves essential for attaining entrepreneurial success. The social and cultural fabric of the community remained central to MeTrEd's operation because its initiatives operated differently from bureaucratic government programs (Anyia et al., 2024). Rural businesses gained trust while developing easy access through this personal engagement approach, which enabled them to surmount structural challenges to growth. Research participants acknowledged that MeTrEds enabled participants to develop professional networks while uniting them to share their combined resources:

MeTrEds invited various microfinance banks and BOI to teach us what we need to do to access their loans...Goodluck, 19 (NRE 6)... We were formed into a cooperative according to department and sourced for funding opportunities collectively– Rita, 58 (NRE 8)

The education provided by MeTrEds transformed how people viewed their ability to be financially independent. Campuses previously did not understand that business success could be planned rather than happen through luck. Participants changed their entrepreneurial approach toward structured business processes after completing MeTrEds training.

“Before I participated in MeTrEds, I used to think of success in business as a function of luck rather than a process”, Michelle, 41, Gokana (ERE 9)

Participants developed better financial decision-making abilities and obtained increased economic self-reliance because of their new way of thinking.

Quantitative Findings

A research study was conducted within 48 communities throughout the Niger Delta states of Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Cross River. The analysis of valid responses from 380 participants evaluated the statistical impact MeTrEds had on rural entrepreneurship development.

Effectiveness of MeTrEds in Facilitating Entrepreneurship Development

The participants evaluated MeTrEds' effectiveness by measuring program impacts on their business expansion as well as the development of their abilities and their access to funding sources. The research findings showed that MeTrEds produced a substantial positive influence on business performance.

Business Growth and Sustainability

Most trainees reported that MeTrEds training benefited their business operations and created positive impacts on business growth. The data about key indicators of entrepreneurship development appears in the Table below:

Table 1: Key Indicators of Entrepreneurship Development

Indicator	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
The training at MeTrEds has helped me grow my business better than it was	32.4	43.4	1.6	20.5	2.1

My entrepreneurial skills have significantly improved, as well as my overall productivity, since I participated in MeTrEds	30.3	45.8	1.3	21.6	1.1
Many of those who participated in MeTrEd's program now own their own businesses and have become a source of employment to the unemployed in our communities	46.6	46.8	2.1	3.4	1.1
MeTrEds helps us to formalise our enterprises by facilitating business name registration for us to enable us to have access to funding opportunities.	32.6	59.7	2.1	4.7	0.7
After training, MeTrEds helps us to access funding for our businesses through its social network platform	30.3	44.7	2.4	21.3	1.3
After training, MeTrEds, through its Rural Incubatory community, continues to offer mentorship, guidance and other support services, which have been very beneficial and enabled us to achieve growth in our businesses.	33.2	38.4	4.2	18.2	6.1

The survey data shows MeTrEds played a substantial role in entrepreneurial growth due to the more than 75% of participants who experienced improvements in their operations, skill acquisition, and financing opportunities.

Statistical Correlation between MeTrEds and Entrepreneurship Development

A research measurement identified the influence of MeTrEds training on indicators which determine entrepreneurship success. The findings demonstrate a significant positive association ($p < 0.05$) between MeTrEds participation and how businesses grow and how well trainees acquire financial competence and generate entrepreneurial outcomes.

Table 2: Statistical Correlation

Variable	Regression Coefficient (β)	Significance Level (p-value)
MeTrEds training participation	0.72	0.001
Access to financial support post-training	0.58	0.003
Business growth and sustainability	0.67	0.002
Entrepreneurial productivity improvement	0.74	0.000

The study validates MeTrEds as an initiative which simultaneously builds capacities and enhances rural business viability while promoting entrepreneurship.

Role of Capacity Building in Business Sustainability and Poverty Reduction

The effects of MeTrEds on poverty reduction as well as business sustainability received evaluation through surveys assessing participant income variations and financial independence, together with business stability improvements following the training.

MeTrEds' Contribution to Poverty Alleviation

The research data demonstrates that MeTrEds interventions served as fundamental elements for bettering the financial security and economic independence of rural entrepreneurs. The table below presents the findings.

Table 3: Results of MeTrEds Interventions for Reducing Poverty

Indicators	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
My stream of income has increased considerably since I participated in MeTrEds, and I can confirm I have overcome extreme poverty.	56.1	38.4	1.1	4.5	0.0
My involvement in MeTrEds has affected my business and my personal well-being positively, as it has helped me to achieve financial independence	50.3	43.2	0.5	4.7	1.8
I am now able to meet my daily financial obligations and live my desired life as a result of increased capacity through the MeTrEds program.	53.4	42.9	1.6	1.6	0.5
Through the mobile food and cloth bank of MeTrEds, I got a lot of clothes and food materials for me and my children.	54.2	40.8	2.1	2.9	0.0
Through the training, I learnt how to organise my business financial records, which has helped me to manage my income and personal expenses effectively.	30.3	64.7	1.6	2.4	1.1
I can afford to buy whatever I want, as well as take care of my	30.3	63.7	2.1	3.4	0.5

children's important needs, as a result of my business					
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More than nine out of ten participants stated that MeTrEds enhanced their finances and independent status, along with their general prosperity, which showed its ability to reduce poverty.

Regression Analysis: MeTrEds and Poverty Alleviation

The study used regression analysis to measure MeTrEd's effectiveness regarding poverty reduction. Research shows a robust, statistically significant link between MeTrEd's educational programs for capacity development and poverty reduction at a p-value less than 0.05.

Table 4: Results of Regression Analysis

Variable	Regression Coefficient (β)	Significance Level (p-value)
MeTrEds training participation	0.7224	0.000
Financial independence post-training	0.68	0.002
Ability to meet financial obligations	0.74	0.001

Research findings validate that MeTrEds drives positive impacts on rural economic self-sufficiency, together with business sustainability, which results in substantial poverty decreases among local communities.

Key Comparative Insights

Success Rates and Business Performance of MeTrEds Participants vs. Non-Participants

Review data indicated MeTrEds graduates demonstrated superior survival of their businesses along with increased revenue growth when compared to non-participant businesses.

Table 5: Results of Success Indicators

Success Indicator	MeTrEds Participants (%)	Non-Participants (%)
Revenue growth post-training	71%	38%
Business sustainability after 2 years	78%	55%
Access to financial credit	62%	31%
Business expansion	55%	28%

The research outcomes show that MeTrEds serves as an effective method for continued business sustainability and economic autonomy. The benchmark data shows that entrepreneurial ventures run by MeTrEds graduates demonstrate better performance compared to non-participant businesses regarding revenue development, business stability, financial liquidity, and expansion potential. The MeTrEds training produced measurable benefits since 71% of participants reported revenue growth, while the number was only 38% for non-attendants. This data demonstrates the impact of enhanced financial knowledge on business performance as well as better positioning and operational strategies. The educational program led to superior business sustainability rates among its graduates, who sustained their businesses at 78% during the second year,

compared to 55% business survival rates among untrained entrepreneurs. The data demonstrates why well-organised entrepreneurship training programs should remain essential for rural business owners because they acquire abilities that help them handle market unpredictability while preserving their business operations.

The study demonstrates that MeTrEds graduates obtained superior access to financial credit, together with better business expansion possibilities, than participants without MeTrEds experience, since 62% of graduates obtained credit, but only 31% of non-participants received similar financial support. The program demonstrates its ability to link underfunded rural businesses with funding opportunities which drive essential business expansion in areas with low economic development. MeTrEds-trained business owners demonstrated that they expanded their companies at a near double rate than their non-entrepreneur counterparts due to their training success. The findings confirm that combination programs, which unite training sessions with financial resources and seasoned leadership mentoring, strengthen both business resilience and economic independence as well as long-term rural economic sustainability.

Contribution of Capacity Building to Self-Sufficiency and Economic Independence

The program at MeTrEds strengthened participants through building capabilities along with mentorship and by providing hands-on training which led to self-reliance and sustainable business management. The participants demonstrated their progress by upgrading from basic subsistence businesses toward modelled enterprises which provided regular income. The qualitative findings have shown that the training at MeTrEds appeared scarcely sufficient to cover basic survival expenses (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). Through taking part in MeTrEds, the respondents gained financial independence so they can support their families without government welfare assistance. The change demonstrates how MeTrEds delivers crucial capabilities to rural business owners who seek financial independence and lasting business achievement.

MeTrEds produced effects that transcended monetary benefits by developing independent business practices and strategic planning abilities among its members. Through the program's education about business fundamentals, relationship development, and market flexibility techniques, participants learned to plan their companies' future expansion instead of focusing exclusively on daily survival. The business participants moved from instigating decision-making to purposeful planning because the program helped them discover business expansion opportunities, implement risk mitigation strategies, and distribute capital for growth. Women entrepreneurs, traditionally excluded from business training and financial networks, now seemed transformed by MeTrEds because they acquired business formalisation and secured capital to expand operations. These entrepreneurs reached financial stability that helped the family while creating new job opportunities within their communities, which demonstrates that MeTrEds served as the economic empowerment accelerator.

The mentorship component, together with peer-learning features from the program, substantially boosted participants' business confidence and made them more resilient. The MeTrEds peer collaboration network facilitated entrepreneurs exchanging knowledge with each other and helping small businesses sustain their operations independently despite the challenges they face in business growth. The participants who previously worried about their poor business confidence and challenged market entry faced significant improvements after

learning essential business techniques such as negotiation and financial direction. Rural entrepreneurs must rely on community-based capacity development models for market success because such systems boost their ability to operate in competitive settings and support local economic growth.

Discussion

This research demonstrates that MeTrEds finishes essential socio-economic hurdles which formerly restricted rural entrepreneurship in the Niger Delta. The entrepreneurs from past years encountered restricted funding opportunities, together with insufficient financial knowledge and limited mentorship guidance, before their businesses failed to thrive. The mobile and community-based MeTrEds model linked distant communities to training and financial aid (Adoghe et al., 2023). Research findings showed that 70% of business owners gained substantial improvements to their sustainability, leading to formal enterprise registration. Organisations must prioritise training their staff at various local levels to help build sustainable economic systems aimed at independence.

One significant advantage of MeTrEds is that its approach to entrepreneurship development enables bottom-up action from rural communities (Adebanji, Adeleye and Fasina, 2023). The program differs from conventional government-led initiatives that implement top-down methods because MeTrEds matches procedures to rural entrepreneur requirements. The program attains higher entrepreneurial sustainability by providing community-based education together with local business mentoring, combined with interconnected financial backing (Adebanji, Adeleye and Fasina, 2023). The combination of skills training together with financial resources availability via mentorship programs enables business expansion and decreases foreign assistance requirements. The training initiative built entrepreneurs' financial competency, and their businesses grew while they added new staff members to serve their regional areas.

The research results support previous studies about rural entrepreneurship development in low-income settings because community-based local initiatives help stimulate economic development. Previous research finds that accessible funding, together with education courses for business and mentoring programs, creates essential conditions for entrepreneurship success among underdeveloped regions. Similar to these initiatives in Kenya, along with programs in India and Bangladesh, residents use mobile approaches for grassroots community-driven programs that help cut poverty and enhance business viability (Olaewaju & Mickiewicz, 2020). The study strengthens the Capability Approach foundation described by Amartya Sen that highlights personal choice and specialised competencies and financial opportunities as essential elements in poverty eradication. Through its provision of required resources and entrepreneurial training, MeTrEds allows people to develop their economic skills while gaining independence alongside enhancing their local economic development (Olaewaju & Mickiewicz, 2020). Entrepreneurship proves to be useful for capability development instead of becoming a purely economic pursuit in areas lacking sufficient resources.

The results from the MeTrEds program prove that additional similar entrepreneurial models should expand into additional developing areas, thanks to the grassroots-based method that addresses important barriers local entrepreneurs encounter with financing, operational sustainability, and market accessibility. MeTrEds operates as a community-based mobile initiative which adjusts its services according to diverse socio-economic settings, so training

and mentorship meet the needs of disadvantaged communities specifically. Rural poverty reduction would become possible on a broader scale because similar models would deliver localised capacity-building resources to entrepreneurs, according to Ureh, Salihu, and Nelson (2022). A national initiative for poverty reduction, together with rural entrepreneur growth, must adopt MeTrEds's mobile and community-oriented method of implementation to extend business support and financial education resources throughout all regions of the country, particularly for entrepreneurs in often forgotten areas. Human communities will develop sustainable economic networks because business owners can keep spending capital on their operations while stopping government assistance and creating neighbourhood jobs.

MeTrEds requires strong institutional support from rural entrepreneurs that can be achieved through better interagency cooperation between governmental entities, private investors, and NGOs. Financial loans and digital banking solutions and capacity-building services developed through public-private partnerships enable the development of rural businesses (Ureh, Salihu and Nelson, 2022). When microfinance opportunities grow alongside streamlined business registration procedures, more rural enterprises will transform into formal businesses, thus letting entrepreneurs obtain supplemental funding for growth and market networking. Rural entrepreneurs experience improved financial stability, and their region develops economically when they migrate from unstructured to formal business systems.

MeTrEds exhibits strong capabilities which make it an effective strategy to guide national poverty elimination both in Nigeria and other nations. The model has successfully boosted business results while raising financial competence and sustainable entrepreneurship, which establishes it as an effective program for rural deployment across Nigerian territories as well as other Sub-Saharan African regions. The success of this initiative depends heavily on establishing a strong policy structure backed by sufficient funding while maintaining continuous program supervision because of the existing economic differences in these areas. Proper government backing alongside continuous accountability checks and program improvements will enable MeTrEds to develop into an expandable model for rural business advancement, thus promoting national economic independence and poverty alleviation across the nation

Conclusion

The research proves MeTrEds serves as a functional model to promote rural development through entrepreneurship in the Niger Delta. Through its dynamic mobile-classroom approach, the program effectively removed three main entrepreneurial challenges, which include insufficient financial education and business mentorship, and limited funding channels. Businesses participating in MeTrEds showed better survival statistics and greater economic autonomy, as well as higher revenue improvements, because of their capacity programs, which support poverty reduction strategies. The primary outcome from this research demonstrates how participation in capacity-building programs leads to both better entrepreneurial self-efficacy and sustainable business development. MeTrEds delivers beneficial skills, financial education, and mentorship services to create sustainable business enterprises which drive economic growth in local areas. Structured training combined with professional mentorship programs led entrepreneurs to succeed in business expansion as well as financial independence, according to study results, but participants without this program guidance failed to achieve such results.

The MeTrEds model emphasises how community-based solutions work to promote entrepreneurship and eliminate regional economic discrepancies in rural territory. The MeTrEds system goes beyond traditional government programs through its integration of local training and mentorship, together with microfinance access to support specific rural business demands. Through its local integration of entrepreneurial education, MeTrEds produces enduring knowledge transfer that enables participants to develop market-specific business approaches for their communities. Entrepreneurial training programs connected to specific business development support lead entrepreneurs toward economic independence, which subsequently enables them to invest in their business and fortify their regional monetary systems.

The MeTrEd's success demonstrates why policy changes must adopt grassroots entrepreneurship development as an essential tool to achieve rural economic progress. The findings back up the idea that poverty elimination tactics need to combine financial assistance while building people's abilities to develop sustainable wealth-generation skills. The expansion of MeTrEds or the adoption of comparable models across wider areas will provide rural entrepreneurs with sustained financial resources and business counsel with expansion potential. The financial independence of entrepreneurs through this approach eliminates external funding requirements, thus creating sustainable economic growth which other deprived locations can replicate.

Future Direction

Access to community-driven training programs should be endorsed through policy frameworks for national economic development initiatives. Rural entrepreneurs must obtain business support that matches their current requirements at each particular location. Rural business owners need better access to financial services because they lack adequate low-interest loans, along with mobile banking options and grants which support their startup development. Rural entrepreneurs need government, along with financial institutions, to develop joint solutions to solve credit accessibility issues. Future research needs to track the extended outcomes of the MeTrEds initiative in rural areas to study their sustainable effects on both employment creation and stable income, as well as economic development across rural communities.

Contribution of Study

The research gives important knowledge, yet authentic information regarding the analysis must be noted. The researchers faced obstacles when trying to perform longitudinal research on MeTrEds participants. The mobile program structure leads to a high entrepreneurship movement, which limits the proper assessment of its long-term outcomes. A restriction in this research stemmed from the limited distribution of participants across areas, together with their limited numbers. A nationwide examination of MeTrEds' effects on rural development would become possible by increasing the research scope across rural areas beyond the 48 communities across six states included in the study. Researchers need to extend their analysis while introducing additional evaluations of multiple rural entrepreneurship initiatives throughout different regions. Although the study has a few limitations, the research results show MeTrEds provides a practical, scalable framework for rural entrepreneurship development. Support from appropriate policies along with institutional backing enables the expansion of MeTrEds to propel economic change and reduce poverty nationwide and internationally.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The outcome of MeTrEds serves as a guide for national policies, especially for poverty alleviation in rural areas and grassroots entrepreneurship framework development. National strategies gain success when they adapt local solutions because this approach builds rural economies toward independence from short-term government funds. The findings presented in this study expand knowledge about rural business development, together with poverty elimination, through the analysis of mobilising community programs like MeTrEds. The research demonstrates practical uses of the Capability Approach, along with Barefoot Economics theory, by filling the theoretical practice implementation gap. Based on MeTrEds' Niger Delta success model, it can be modified for application in Sub-Saharan African areas and developing economies which encounter similar rural entrepreneurial challenges.

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