
**The Role of Community Based Organizations in the Development of Rural Communities in
Akwa Ibom State**

By

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the role of community based organization in the development of rural communities in Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives were: to examine the structure of selected Community Based Organization (CBOs). To identify the contributions of the organizations to the development of rural communities which they operate and to identify the constraints encountered by the organizations. The President/Vice President of 15 CBOs that were registered or not registered. The major findings were: majority of the CBOs executed projects such as drainage, road repair, minor road construction, bore through the help from their contributions and levies, the major findings from constraints encountered by CBOs in their community development efforts were; lack of finance, high cost of materials and lack of government support. Based on the findings, it was recommended that government should make conscious effort towards supporting CBOs in community development projects, well to do individuals and elites that are indigenes of various communities should be encouraged to come and develop their immediate rural communities through monetary donations and use of their position to attract government incorporation of architectural practices will enhance infrastructural durability in rural areas.

Key Words: Community Based Organization, Development, Rural Communities

Introduction

The history and importance of community based organizations CBOs in rural areas is a long one. They have been deeply involved in activities that have impacted on the livelihood of the rural people. CBOs are formal voluntary social groups that are found in communities which differ in size, objective and degree of interaction among members. In these organizations, members have the ability to influence ideas and actions of others with the purpose to plan, implement and monitor social and economic development programmes; as well as provide technical and financial help to the communities. CBOs positively affect the process of rural change through increase in income, improvement in health, nutrition, literacy of the people etc. Some of the developmental programmes they introduce bring changes to the rural communities such as health, education, micro-finance, micro-enterprise, sustainable agriculture, animal husbandry, safe water and sanitation (Wahab, 2000).

Agboola (1998) noted that successive Nigerian governments have responded to both rural and urban problems by evolving poverty alleviation programmes to help stir development. But government top-down approach and lack of involvement of the people at the bottom-up strategy have weakened the confidence of the people. Communities, therefore, seek solace in CBOs, which pressurize government for attention to development problems in their communities and/or undertake development programmes and projects that they observe are very much needed in their immediate communities.

The CBOs are associated with self-help (Ogundipe, 2003). They constitute the media for resource mobilization to confront local challenges. These include the finance and execution of projects, lobbying and nomination of representatives to government offices to air their views and press their needs and also develop human resources against future developmental needs of immediate communities. Thus, their impacts have been felt in the areas of agricultural development, economic development, policy matters, health education, infrastructure, environmental and physical development among others (Agboola, 1998).

Statement of Problem

Despite the accomplishments outlined, many CBOs have risen and fallen like old empires, while some have had no significant impact since their establishment due to poor funding because CBOs in African communities are micro-systems within the macro-environment that is afflicted by economic regression, low standard of living and poverty. Lack of government support and high cost of materials for executing projects also contribute to these problems. There is, therefore, the need to appraise the socio-economic status of existing CBOs in the communities of developing nations like Nigeria and identifying the degree of impact they have exerted on their physical or immediate environment.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the role of community based organizations in the development of rural communities in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant influence of community based organisation on the development of communities in Akwa Ibom State.

Conceptual Frame Work

Concepts of Community Based Organization

Community Based Organization other-wise known as local organizations have been given different places. These include Community Development Associations, neighbor-hood Councils and united community among others (Agboola, 1998).

Community based organizations are set up by collective efforts of indigenous people of homo or heterogeneous attributes but living or working within the same environment. Their coming together creates conditions which broaden the base of self-governance and diffusion of the power through a wider circle of the population (Adeyemo, 2002, Adejumobi, 1991). It is seen as voluntary, non-profit, non-governmental and highly localized or neighbor-hood institutions

whose membership is placed on equal level and whose main goal is the improvement of the social and economic well-being of every member (Abegunde, 2004).

CBOS are localized in that their spheres of influence hardly extend beyond their immediate communities in the neighborhood. They are non-governmental because all members contribute economically towards the fulfillment of their responsibilities to the immediate environment and not depend on government fulfilling these (Claudia, 2003). They are concerned with the development problems of and development programme projects in their various areas. They respond to community felt needs rather than market demand or pressure. Benefits accrued from members' contributions to the association are shared accordingly with fairness.

Distinction has been made between community based organizations (CBO) and non-governmental organizations (NGO) (Agboola, 1998). However, scholars agreed that CBO and NGO have common attributes and their differences are a matter of "scale and location". According to them, CBO suggest a simple institution that covers a relatively small area with local identity while NGO has a sophisticated and complex structure and covers a wider area and projects. From the examples made by one of them, the Rotary International qualifies as NGO but the Rotary Club of a community qualifies as CBO. In essence, community development is the main focus of the CBO. Through community development, efforts of the people are united with those of government authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities so as to integrate them into life of the nations and to enable their people to contribute fully to national progress. Along this line, Fakoya, Apantaku, Oyesola (2000) argued that community development provides avenue for people to organize themselves for planning action, define their common and individual needs and problems, make group and individual plans to meet their needs and solve their problem, execute these plans with a minimum reliance upon community resources and supplement these resources when necessary with services and materials from government and non-governmental agencies outside their communities.

In the same vein Bamidele (1994) saw it as a process whereby both urban and rural communities are assisted to provide for themselves, with deliberate and conscious speed, those services and amenities are what they need but which neither the state government nor local government has provided. Significant in these is that community development is the first joint efforts of the people who would be the direct beneficiaries before government and non-governmental organizations that could be termed initiators and supporters are involved and absorbed. The degree of involvement of the former, therefore determines the level of development on any given area. In another dimension, community development is not real until there is individual's participation. Participation therefore embraces the initiators, supporters and the beneficiaries of any given development programme (Albert. 2009). To participate, therefore, means to share in decision about goals and objectives, of what should be done, how and by whom. Participatory development is essential for sustainable development programme. It is an empowering process which seeks to change behavior through education, help community to tap their own resources and skills and provide the communities with the tools they require to advance in the way they deem fit (Geldof, 1998).

CBOs therefore, serve as wheels for the vehicle of grassroots participation in indigenous programmes and projects to satisfy local needs. Such participation as characterized in CBOs could be in cash or kind, levied or of a free choice. Although it was argued that CBOs have freedom of entry or exit, it was also observed that this freedom could be generalized with the exclusion of community based institutions organized by landlords, community or clan leaders, age group fans and trade unions, among others. On this, Ogundipe (2003) emphasized that what matters most is the development of the people's communities through the mobilization of community efforts. Such efforts, according to Abegunde (2004) are harmonized towards protection of citizen's provision of infrastructure, materials and opportunities and upliftment of community's images among others.

Types of community based organizations

Categorizing Community Based Organizations is difficult because they may range from voluntary organizations to professional service agencies to informal groups. These organizations are considered to include churches, unions, schools, health-care agencies, social- service groups, fraternities, and clubs. Community Based Organization are predominantly conceptualized as nonprofit, but broader conceptions of commonness, sometimes, include all organizations including for-profit enterprises. Service agencies are frequently termed community based organizations because their services have shifted from centralized institutional settings to dispersed geographical locations providing greater access to residents. Social-service agencies have received criticisms because, although their geographic placement have improved resident access, their hierarchical social practices retain social- and cultural-access barriers.

There is a further distinction to be made, between volunteer and professional organizations. Volunteer organizations often have professional or paid staff, but volunteers performs the vast majority of these organizations' functions. These organizations are frequently' advocacy-oriented, and they apply community-organizing strategies to accomplish their goals. In contrast, professional organizations are usually staffed by experts who provide services with little or no volunteer input. These services-oriented organizations usually have greater resources than volunteer organizations, and they interface with residents based on professional norms and standards, whereas volunteer organizations have a more egalitarian orientation.

Another type of community organization is the informal group. These groups are represented by informal networks of friends and neighbours that exist throughout communities. The growth or decline in the number of these groups has been debated while some argue that informal groups such as bowling leagues, are declining. There is also evidence that their groups. Such as self-help groups or small support groups, have proliferated.

Roles of Community Based Organizations

Development and operation of infrastructure: Community-based organizations and cooperatives can acquire, subdivide and develop land, construct housing, provide infrastructure and operate and maintain infrastructure such as wells or public toilets and solid waste collection services. They can also develop building material supply centers and other community-based economic enterprises. In many cases, they will need technical assistance or advice from governmental agencies or higher-level CBOs.

Supporting Innovation, Demonstration and Pilot Projects: CBO have the advantage of selecting particular places for innovative projects and specify in advance the length of time which they will be supporting the project overcoming some of the shortcomings that government face in this respect. CBOs can also be pilot for larger government projects by virtue of their ability to act more quickly than the government bureaucracy.

Facilitating communication: CBOs use interpersonal methods of communication, and study the right entry points whereby they gain the trust of the community they seek to benefit. They would also have a good idea of the feasibility of the projects they take up. The significance of this role to the government is that CBOs can communicate to the policy-making levels of government, information about the lives, capabilities, attitudes and cultural characteristics of people at the local level.

CBOs can facilitate communication upward from people to the government and downward from the government to the people. Communication upward involves informing government about what local people are thinking, doing and feeling while communication downward involves informing local people about what the government is planning and doing. CBOs are also in a unique position to share information horizontally, networking among organizations doing similar work.

Technical Assistance and Training: Training institution and CBOs can develop a technical assistance and training capacity and use this to assist both CBOs and governments.

Research, monitoring and evaluation: Innovative activities need to be carefully documented and shared – effective participatory monitoring would permit the sharing of results with the people themselves as well as with the project staff.

Advocacy for and with the poor: In some cases, CBOs spokespersons or ombudsmen for the poor and attempt to influence government policy and programmes on their behalf. This may be done through a variety of means ranging from demonstration and pilot projects to participation in public for the formulation of government policy and plans, to publicizing research results and case studies of the poor. Thus, CBOs play roles from advocates for the poor to implementers of government programmes; from agitators and critics to partners and advisors; from sponsors of pilot projects to mediators. (Ogunleye and Oladeinde 2013)

Community Based Organizations and Physical Development in Nigeria

The study conducted by Olomola (2001) in Lagos state revealed that CBOs in the state solely relied on internally generated revenue with very little aid from the government. This was why the CBO that won the best CBO award in 1988 emanated from Lagos State. The organization in 1998 built a primary school, bank, court hall, community hall, post office and opened up several roads for vehicle usage (Olomola, 2001). A study conducted by Abegunde (2004) on the activities of CBOs in the area revealed that about 40% of these CBOs provided social facilities worth millions of Naira to their immediate community.

Similarly, CBOs in Oyo State were said to be economically buoyant to have constructed access roads within neighborhoods, built schools and health centers, provided portable water and saw to the general welfare of their members without government assistance (Adejumobi, 1991). It was recorded that the ultramodern maternity center built by CBOs in Udu Local Government

area of the state aroused no government's interest, in that the maternity could not take off for over 10 years after construction because of lack of personnel and equipments from the government of the area (Olomola, 2001). The experience of CBOs in Kano State differed. Their government assisted them in discharging their responsibilities to the communities through fund provision (Adejumobi, 1991). Their problems were the conflict of interest, level of education of community development workers among the two tiers of government (State and Local), low and poor public acceptance. Unlike in Oyo State, the people were receptive to CBOs activities but inadequate government support and economic status of members limited their operation (Adejumobi, 1991).

Similarly, economic problem afflicted CBOs in Cross River State. It was discovered that CBOs in the state were not properly organized, ineffective in performance, made decisions in isolation and wasted their meager resources. For instance, it was recorded that they built schools and health centers without carrying the government along, thus the building lie idle without personnel and equipment from appropriate authorities.

In Rivers State, Oludimu (1990) showed that it was local custom and traditions that guided operations of the CBOs. Their inefficiency was a result of irregular attendance in meetings. Unfortunately, it is in such meetings that they could generate funds and ideas, which are required for ensuring progress in CBOs activities. Despite shortcomings of CBOs in some of the states in Nigeria, the fact remains that significant efforts have been made by the people in contributing to the socio-economic development of their immediate vicinity. If social and economic problems that impede effective participation of people are addressed, CBOs in Nigeria can contribute towards poverty alleviation and physical development in Nigerian communities.

Architecture and Rural Development

The management and maintenance of safe and well-planned coastlines and country side can be said to be part of the larger issues of handling environmental issues. The architectural imperatives in the development of rural infrastructure stem from coastlines and country side: (1) Beautification, (2) Durability (3) occupational engagement (4) safety of rural indigenes and (5) structural physicality.

Identification with the above calls for the practice and engagement of architecture. First if infrastructure provided must stem high sea tides and tidal floods, involvement of professional architects at the planning and execution levels of rural parks, flood controls, buildings and construction of rural roads must be considered. Architects, by training, are exposed to the nitty-gritty of putting land mark designs and durable structures with cost safety valves in place. This is so if we must try to mitigate health hazard of the rural dwellers.

Safety is at the core of management professionalism. Alignment with architectural science in the context of development endeavors of CBOs' in the economic sustainability of rural communities in order to enhance living conditions is necessary.

Constraints Faced by Community Based Organization

CONSTRAINTS

Lack of finance

Lack of cooperation on the part of members

Youth restiveness
Bad leadership
Lack of commitment on the part of members
Embezzlement of funds
High cost of materials
Lack of government support

The Area of Focus

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The state is located in the coastal southern part of the country, lying between latitude 4⁰32' N and 5⁰33 N and longitudes 7⁰25 and 8⁰25'E. The state is bounded on the north by Ebonyi State, on East by Cross River State, on the south by the Atlantic Ocean and on the West by Rivers State and Abia. Akwa Ibom has a land mass area of 7, 081sqkm with an ocean front which spans a distance of 129kms from Ikot Abasi in the West to Oron in the East. Akwa Ibom State presents a pasture of captivating coastal, mangrove forest and beautiful sand beach resorts.

Akwa Ibom State is one of Nigeria's 36 states, with a population of over 5 million people and more than 1 million people in Diaspora. It was created in 1987 from the Cross River State and it is currently, the highest oil/gas producing state in the country. Akwa Ibom State has (31) thirty one local government areas in all. The people are predominantly of the Christian faith. The main ethnic group of the state is Ibibio with minority Annang, Oron cultural tribes.

The major social activities are Ekpo Masquerade while economic activities includes fishing, crops and livestock cultivation, art and culture. The major crops grown in the area are yam, melon, cassava, and such farm animals like goats, chicken, pig, dog, and fisheries, etc are kept.

Methods

Expost facto research design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the Management and staff of Community Based Organizations as well as Community Heads in Akwa Ibom State. In order to select sample, 250 respondents were obtained through the stratified random sampling method. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument so developed was made to pass through face and content validation by experts in the field. The reliability was tested using CRONBACH reliability test at .84 coefficient. The data obtained were analysed using the Simple regression, while the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 alpha level.

Result and Discussion

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis states that there is significant influence of community development on community based organisation.

In order to test the hypothesis multiple regression was used to analyse the data, (see table 1).

TABLE 1
Multiple regression of the joint influence of community development on community based organizations

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.79a	0.63	0.63	1.07	0.63

***Significant at 0.05 level; df =248; N =250; critical r-value = 0.139**

The table shows that the calculated R-value 0.79 was greater than the critical R-value of 0.113 at 0.5 alpha level with 332 degree of freedom. The R-square value of 0.63 predicts 63% of relationship between community development and community based organizations. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant joint influence of community development on community based organizations.

It was also deemed necessary to find out the extent of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 2).

TABLE 2
Analysis of variance of the difference in the influence of community based organizations on Development of Communities in Akwa Ibom state

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	485.03	1	485.03	423.86	.000b
Residual	283.79	248	1.144		
Total	768.82	249			

- a. Dependent Variable: Community Development.
- b. Predictors: (Constant), CBO

The above table presents the calculated F-value as (423.86) and the critical f-value as (000). Being that the critical f-value (000a) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is significant influence exerted by the independent variables (community based organizations) on the dependent variable which is community development. The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

Conclusion

Community Based organizations are useful channels for development of rural communities in Akwa Ibom State. In the course of this study, it was discovered that Community Based Organizations can assist in socio-economic and physical development of both members and their immediate communities. Some of the Community Based Organizations also provided a useful channel for co-operation of communities with government and their agencies in the assistance of members of the Community Based Organizations in times of need through financial support to members. It also revealed that income encouraged the people to embark on self-help projects.

Community Based Organizations have contributed immensely in the execution of self-help projects. Therefore, they are of great relevance to rural community development.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- ❖ Government should make conscious effort towards supporting CBOs in community development projects.
- ❖ A continuous contribution towards Community Based Organizations should be encouraged in order to fast – track the general development of the community in the grass-roots.
- ❖ The well to do individuals and elites that are indigenes of the various communities should be encouraged to develop their immediate rural communities through monetary donations and use their positions to attract government aids for rural development.
- ❖ Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), charity organizations, multinational companies and their business organizations can invest/grant aids to develop rural areas and help complete some of the abandoned self-help projects that dots all over the place in the rural communities in Akwa Ibom State.
- ❖ At every point of CBOs development activities, it must be imperative to involve architects both at planning and execution stages if quality development strides must be achieved.

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