

## Effects of Community Based Organizations Activities on Poverty Alleviation in Yewa South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study examined the effect of community based organizations activities on poverty alleviation in Yewa South Local Government Area of Ogun State Nigeria. The community development associations and clubs/societies in the area formed the major organizations in the survey. The hypotheses were tested to determine the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and membership. There is significant relationship between membership of Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and marital status, occupation and level of education i.e.  $p > 0.05$ . The effect of projects executed and poverty level showed no significant relationship i.e.,  $p > 0.05$ . The results showed that majority of community based organization members (80%) are men except for organizations having exclusively female membership. Total 35% of community based organization members are public servants, while retirees formed 20%, farmers 28%, traders and company workers formed 10 and 7%, respectively. The respondents' perception of membership criteria indicated that being an indigene (55%) socio-economic status (30%) and age (15%) are the major factors.

**Key words:** Effects, community, organization, activities, poverty, alleviation

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### INTRODUCTION

Rural poverty and insufficiency of food are twin evils, which have bedeviled Africa and Nigeria in particular. Poverty normally has the effect of narrowing the horizons of possibility. It saps energy not only for physical work but for opening the mind to opportunities. In Nigeria, the general pattern of rural poverty includes low farm income resulting from poor yield, static production technology, inefficient production system and inadequate infrastructural facilities. Poverty as it were is an indication of under-development and that is why, most of the underdeveloped nations are the worst hit by poverty and suffering. Rural poverty is not just a shortage of material goods. It is usually part of a syndrome, which includes low status in community, lack of influence, economic and political dependence and insecure or irregular sources of income. It also involves a limited range of economic and social opportunities and a preoccupation with immediate issues like hunger, shelter and various carnal pleasures (Fabiya and Idowu, 1999).

It has become a common knowledge that the government alone cannot provide the needed economic development and human welfare packages to alleviate poverty. This may result from limited resources or nonchalant attitude and greediness of the leadership involved in running the government at the local, state and federal levels. The involvement of the people directly or

indirectly will hasten the rate of development. The involvement of the chairmen of community development association in the running of community banks (Mabogunje, 1992) was made to put the power of economic liberation and poverty alleviation in the hand of community members.

Poverty alleviation is a pre-condition for a nation's development because it involves major transformation of the lower and middle class above the poverty level. Several governmental and non-governmental organizations at national and international levels with focus on human welfare and poverty reduction include;

- Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research of which International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (I.I.T.A) Ibadan, Nigeria is a corporate member
- The World Hunger Project
- Strategic Partnership with Africa

In Nigeria, Operation Farewell to Poverty with headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria is a non-governmental organization with a mission to eradicate poverty and create wealth through job creation, training for skill acquisition and promotion of cottage industries. Other services include provision of credit facilities, importation of food items and the development of infrastructure and social services (Business Guide, 2000).

The need for self-help projects that will enhance community development in developing countries evolved from the inability of the government to provide all the social and economic needs of the populace. The provision of the socio-economic needs will directly influence the poverty level thus, leading to improve the living standard. Community based organizations in their various forms are known to enhance community development by providing infrastructures and socio-economic services. There are various categories of community based organizations that purely perform social function; some are cultural in their outlook to community development and some focus on economic development. Community based organizations, associations, or groups of people, who associate purposely to achieve a common goal that will transform the economic and social life of the community in the long/short run explore the advantages of felt needs of the people to secure their interest as a matter of helping themselves to solve their own problems.

**Community participation in development:** Community participation involves active involvement of the community members in particular projects geared towards the development of an area. Such projects may be executed by a group of people, individual, agency and sometimes the government. The participation may be in cash or kind and due to various factors such as age, income level and social status, the level of participation by individuals may vary. Community development projects include the social and infrastructural facilities such as construction of roads, bore holes, building of community centers (or town hall), police posts, schools, markets, recreational centers, etc. The main purpose of community development projects is to organize, develop and utilize available natural resources and manpower. These resources are utilized in such a way that the entire rural population depending on them has an opportunity to meet their basic needs along with reasonable facilities for education and health. This promotes in a positive and healthy environment.

Therefore, people direct effort towards community development projects in order to reduce the effects of poverty. The current improvement in rural transformation in Nigeria results from the participation of community members in community projects. Many rural areas have been enjoying some of the infrastructural facilities like health, education water and electricity supplies. The complementary efforts of the government after the community members have initiated the projects have great potentials of solving problems associated with poverty and development in Nigeria.

The approaches to community development in Nigeria are in 2 levels: governmental and the local people's levels.

At the governmental level, community development is handled through a multi-purpose approach. This involves an attempt at developing rural areas by coordinating the extension services of various ministries and integrating the people's organized self help effort with the specialized services of the government and voluntary agencies. On the other hand, at the people's level, community development in Nigeria is tackled through the self help approach mainly.

The total development of any community socially, politically and economically will have direct influence on the survival and poverty level. Therefore, to reduce the poverty level, the rate of involvement of community dwellers (particularly through community based organizations) must be very high. Hence, the goal of community based organizations is not to embark on projects that meet the immediate needs of the people but such projects must have a lasting future value on the dwellers with a view to curtailing population drift. This will help to reduce endemic social misery in most towns and permit equitable distribution of economic activities within the country.

**Statement of problem:** The problem of under development in communities have resulted in poverty and suffering. The need of the people together with the opportunity to build a strong rural economy has been by passed. The government has given priority to the demand of the urban dwellers at the expense of the rural populace. The rural areas, where majority of Nigerians live and work suffers lack of amenities and infrastructures.

Absolute dependence on the government and poor execution of development projects has led to the failure of most development projects. The philosophy behind the formation of community based organization arose from the need to bridge the poverty gap created by low level development in communities. The self help approach to initiation and execution of development projects is one of the strategies being used by community based organizations.

**Objective of study:** The broad objective of this study is to assess the effects of the activities of community based organizations on poverty level and the extent of community development in Yewa South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of study are to:

- Identify the functioning community based organization in the area and determine the socio-economical and demographic characteristics of their members

- Examine the goals and objectives of the community based organizations in relation to the socio-economic development and the need of their communities
- Investigate the development and poverty alleviation project embarked upon by the organization
- Determine the effect of the activities of community based organizations on the socio-economic life of the people especially poverty levels and extent of development in the area

**Hypothesis:** The following hypothesis stated in the null form were tested:

$H_{01}$  = There is no significant relationship between demographic/socio-economic characteristics and membership of community based organizations

$H_{02}$  = There is no significant relationship between the types of projects executed by the community based organizations and the level of poverty as well as the extent of development of the study area

**Significance of the study:** The outcome of this study provides information on the influence of the activities of community based organizations on rural development and poverty alleviation. It provides insight on the level of community participation in self help projects as a means of supplementing the efforts of government. It also provides useful hints for further research on activities of community based organizations in developing countries.

**Literature review:** The aggregation of families habitually living together within a definite geographical location could be referred to as a community. Sociologically, a community refers to people living within common locality having shared interest and behavioral patterns.

It also implies shared interest, characteristics, association as in the expression of community interest like; business community and farming community, when viewed psychologically. In geographical terms, community denotes a specific area where people cluster.

The under developed nature of most communities have resulted in poverty and has led to the need to organize the people to identify with and share responsibility for solving problems affecting them as a group or community. This may be done through the process of community development, community organization or community relations. According to Anyanwu (1992), community organization is a process by which a community is mobilized to identify its needs or recognize a problem within its environment, develop the

will to work together in meeting such needs or resolving the problem, find sources internally and externally to deal with the problems or needs by taking action. It is a complex technique designed to involve people, specialists and technical services to mobilize and facilitate the effective use of resources for community development. Community development is a method or process of tackling the problem of community organization in order to bring about economic development or alleviate poverty.

Community based organizations explore the advantage of felt needs of the people to secure their interest as a way of helping them to solve their own problems. Community participation involves active involvement of the local community in a particular project meant for their own benefit. The participation may be in cash or kind and due to various factors such as: status, income level and age, the level of participation by individual vary.

**Poverty alleviation initiatives:** The present Nigerian Federal Government is deeply concerned about reducing the poverty level such that poverty alleviation is a fundamental objective of the administration.

In the past few years, poverty alleviation in Nigeria consists of series of purposive acts and measures designed locally, nationally and internationally to address the poverty problem. The initial efforts at poverty alleviation centered on the provision of basic needs by the Nigerian government (Ilori, 1999) and later it was realized that poverty alleviation is best addressed based on peculiarities of the situation under consideration. Several development programmes like Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Rural Banking Scheme, Rural Electrification Scheme, Agricultural Development Programme, (ADP) River Basin Development Authorities etc. were initiated to benefit and boost the economic level. Even though, they were designed and executed not as poverty alleviation programmes but as development programmes, Ilori (1999) (ibid) analyzed that the benefits from them only trickle down to the poor.

The introduction of Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment programme (NDE), Better Life for Rural Women etc. during Structural Adjustment Programme of 1986 made little or no improvement on the poverty level. The resultant effect of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) induced poverty alleviation initiatives led to only a decrease from 46.3% in 1985-42.8% in 1992 with the conditions of the core poor getting worsened (F.O.S., 1985, 1993, 1999).

**Community approach to poverty alleviation:** Community refers to a group of people inhabiting a limited area, who have a sense of belonging together and who through their organized relationships share and carry on activities in pursuit of their common interests. The community approach to poverty reduction in Nigeria documented as the Community Action Programme for Poverty Alleviation (CAPPA) was the result of effort of a study Group Constituted by Federal Government of Nigeria in 1993 through the National Planning Commission.

The committee's recommendation for implementation of the strategy was approved by the government in the first quarter of 1996. According to Ilori (1999) (ibid), the draft policy has been completed since the first quarter of 1999 and it is up till now awaiting final approval.

The hope of the poverty-ridden populace in the community approach to poverty alleviation is based on the direct participation of the poor in the solution to their problem as the felt needs are identified. Okunmadewa (1999) noted that economic growth alone is not sufficient for poverty reduction; growth must be accompanied with equity and promoted by participation.

**Community based organizations in Yewa South local government area:** The existence of community based organizations in Yewaland dated the early 1940's but the formation of the then Egbado Union in 1948 was a clear landmark. It was the effort of this union that led to the establishment of Egbado college (now Yewa College) Ilaro in 1951 (Akinola, 1999).

Even though, traditional groups have existed like it use to be in typical African communities, Yewaland generally comprises of small dispersed independent communities having little or no cultural affinity with one another among the diverse sub-ethnics groups. Adekunle and Oyekanmi (1999) further remarked that the peculiarity of this settlement pattern made coming together to share areas of common interest difficult. This made it impossible for them to come together early for socio-economic programmes that will foster development.

The formation of Egbado Consultative Forum according to Bello (ibid) stopped midway before the latter regrouping to form the present Yewa Think Tank. The formation of community development associations at all community levels also started as an agency for direct participation in self help projects and a link between the communities and the government to enhance governmental support for the execution of projects initiated by the people. Presently, all communities and

quarters in towns and villages are grouping together for collective approach to self help projects that will enhance development.

There are several clubs and societies too in towns and villages in Yewa South apart from those that are broad based with membership drawn from all parts of Yewaland. Yewa Think Tank is like an apex organization for all the community based organizations in Yewaland and it consists of academics, industrialists, business executives, retired top public servants and force officers, political and community leaders (Afonja, 1995). Cooperative societies remain the most important socio-economic development unit at the grassroots level in Yewaland (Adedoyin, 2008; Ogholo and Chunkwugu, 1999).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Yewa South local government area of ogun state, Nigeria. The sampling frame covered the villages under towns (Ilaro, Owode and Oke-Odan), which were purposively selected because they are part of the major divisions in the local government area. The random techniques of balloting was used in ratio 4:3:3 among the three communities. Questionnaires were designed and administered. Secondary data were sourced from records and documents of community based organizations and Yewa South Local Government (Community Development Department). Information was also obtained through communication with relevant experts, community based organization officers and local government officials. The various publications by authorities in Yewaland and several other publications constituted the secondary data. Library books on poverty alleviation, community development and reports of non-governmental organizations and governmental organizations were also consulted.

**Data collection:** The data collection exercise was accomplished with the support of community development workers in the area of study the members of community based organizations, who are resident in the local government area and non-resident were interviewed. Visits were also made to community development project sites.

**Technique of data analysis:** Descriptive data analysis using frequency distribution, percentages and means were primarily used to describe socio-economic characteristic and other variables. Statistical analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the relationship between the variables.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>01</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between demographic/socio-economic characteristics and membership of community based organizations.

The Table 1 showed that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation of 0.448 is greater than the critical r of 0.05 (0.448 > critical of 0.05). Hence, there is a positive relationship between socio-economic characteristics and membership of community based organizations. Testing the level of significance at 0.05, df 98, critical t 2.00 then the calculated t-value (3.154) is greater than the tabulated value of (2.000). The implication of this is that there is a significant relation between the demographic/socio-economic characteristics and membership of community based organizations. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between membership and socio-economic characteristics has been rejected and alternative accepted.

**Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>02</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between the number of projects executed by the organization on one hand and the level of the poverty as well as the extent of development of the study area on the other.

According to the information in Table 2, Person Product Moment Correlation of 0.18 is greater than the critical r of 0.5 (0.18 > critical r of 0.05) therefore, there is a positive relationship between the 2 variables, effect of the projects executed and the poverty level. Testing the level of significance at 0.05 the degree of freedom of 98 critical t of 2.00, the calculated t value of 1.285 is less than the tabulated t of 2.000. (1.285 < 2.000) this implies that there is no significant relationship between projects executed and poverty alleviation. Thus, the (H<sub>02</sub>) null hypothesis is accepted because there is ample evidence (t-cal, t-tab value). The conclusion is that the development/poverty alleviation projects by the community based organizations have no significant effect on the poverty level.

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation of relationship between socio-economic characteristics of community based organizations

Variables	N	X	ΣxY	ΣX <sup>2</sup>	ΣY <sup>2</sup>	R	T
Socio-economic Characteristics (x)	100	5.08	413.6	33335.2	255.30	0.448	3.154
Membership (y)	100	19.2	-	-	-	-	-

t-cal 3.154, t-tab 2.000

Table 2: Pearson moment correlation of relationship between project executed and the level of poverty/extent of development

Variables	N	X	ΣxY	ΣX <sup>2</sup>	ΣY	R	T
Socio-economic Characteristic (x)	100	7.46	654.69	2045.5	6435.66	0.18	1.285NS
Membership (y)	100	21.86	-	-	-	-	-

t-cal 1.285, t-tab 2.00

**Major findings:** The two major groups of community based organizations considered in this study in Yewa South Local Government Area include:

- Community Development Association/Concils
- Clubs and Societies

The community development associations exist in all the towns and villages and specific quarters in the major towns. The three Area Development Council a conglomerate of community development councils are:

- Ilaro Area Community Development Council
- Idogo Area Community Development Council
- Ifekowajo Area Community Development Council

Clubs and societies exist all over the local government with no direct linkage with one another like the community development association, Metro Club Ilaro, Peacock Club of Nigeria Ilaro, Unique Social Club of Oke-odan, The Excel Elite Association, Owode-Yewa and several others like them exists only in their specific towns. The members are both residents and non-residents of the locality. Some of the members live in other towns and state of the country but come occasionally to attend the club obligations e.g., Ifelodun Social Club Owode-Yewa. Yewa Think Tank, Yewa forum, Yewa Club and Yewa Youth movement are broad based in their outlook. Membership is drawn from all parts of Yewaland and goals are pursued for the overall development of Yewaland of which Yewa South is a central area. The findings of this study reveal an upsurge in the number of community based organizations, when compared to only Egbado Union that existed as far back as 1948.

**Development and poverty alleviation projects:** The projects embarked upon by the organizations were targeted towards the general socio-economic development of the area. The provision of infrastructure like electricity and scholarship award for students in higher institutions was targeted towards improvement of infrastructural facilities and educational development, respectively. The direct effect of such effort on poverty level may not be immediately obvious, but will manifest on the long run. Specific poverty-reduction projects like entrepreneurial training in small/medium scale businesses, craftwork and establishment of cottage industries were not taken up at all by the organizations.

Lectures, symposia and seminars conducted by some of the organizations focused on liberation from poverty and under development, empowerment and capacity building as the primary goals. The result of this was

manifested through the various publications sponsored by Yewa Think Tank and launching of Education Trust Fund for Yewaland in March, 2001. Specific findings of this research of effort of community based organizations for capacity building and empowerment include:

- Change of name from Egbado to Yewa as a means of reflecting the multi-ethnic nature and the clear identity of the area as an initial measure to overcome the problem of developmental neglect (OGSG Gazette, 1997)
- Publication of books by Yewa Think Tank e.g the birth of Yewaland, Iwaye ile Yewa and Blue Prints on Education in Yewaland

Conclusively, it was gathered through this study that the needed team spirit to foster cooperation and accelerated development was lacking among the people generally and the CBO members in particular. This reflected through poor attendance at meetings, conservatism and the belief that government must be solely responsible for developmental and poverty alleviation. The problem of unwillingness to cooperate to purposively tackled communal problems have been observed (Adeosun, 1999; Adekunle and Oyekanmi, 1999) as a hindrance to conscious efforts at uniting the people. This problem was highlighted by an American anthropologist Oliver Osborne far back 1968, when he commented that the Egbados lack the necessary organizational skills and habit of cooperation. The fact of that observation still holds till today. The findings also reveal that the infrastructural projects handled by the organizations took a long time before they could be completed and they were supported with government funding after the community based organizations initiated the projects.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study revealed that the various projects executed by the community based organizations in Yewa South Local Government Area have no significant effect on poverty reduction in the area. The few projects, particular provisions of infrastructures are not directly initiated as poverty reduction projects but they were mainly aimed at addressing the problems of neglect by government for development purposes. There were no specific projects on small/medium scale business improvement. There was no effort directed to specifically boost the morale of farmers, who form the bulk of the population to form associations or improve their productivity and earning capacity. However, the trends of promoting educational

development, the change of name from Egbado to Yewa, the publication of facts and figures about the area and formation of more community based organizations give hope for future prospects.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is need for more enlightenment on the need for cooperation and participation spirit at communal levels to initiate self help projects in the study area. This can be achieved through the community leaders and the community development officers(change agent). The objectives and goals of community development should be well defined to address priority needs of curtailing poverty level. The study area predominantly comprising agrarian communities deserves more of poverty reduction projects that are agro-based. The community based organizations in the area need to focus more on projects that would provide immediate relief to poverty alongside to the long-term and medium-term solutions. The local government authority needs to ensure proper documentation of activities of community based organizations in the study area as a means of providing data base for assessing the activities of the organizations. It is also recommended that community development workers in the study area needs more training and further enlightenment on their activities as change-agents and their role as resource persons to the community on development issues.

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