

Curing Socio-Economic ILLS in Obudu Local Government Area: An Assessment of Non-Governmental Agencies Activities

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ABSTRACT

The study objective is to assess the activities of Non-governmental Agencies in curing the Socio-economic ills of Obudu Local Government Area of Cross river State, Nigeria. The study specifically examine the relationship between NGOs involvement in education, capacity development and the socio-economic development of the people. The ex-post factor research design was adopted in the process of collecting data from 400 respondents from Obudu Local government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria, using the random sampling technique. The instrument of data collection is the questionnaire. Data collected from the field was analyzed using Independent T-Test. Results revealed that NGOs involvement in education of the rural people exerts significant effects on the socio-economic development of the rural communities and that NGOs involvement in capacity building/training exerts significant effect on the overall improved standard of living of the rural people. The study thereby recommends that the federal, State and local governments should provide a conducive environment for NGOs to operate in rural communities as their presence will likely bring the development of the society amongst others.

Keywords: Non-governmental Organization, Socio-economic ills, Education, Capacity building

INTRODUCTION

The rural and urban dwellers and population across the globe desires provision of socio-economic facilities to improve their quality of life at every point in life. Contrary to this, their interest and aspirations still remain largely unfulfilled due to lack of infrastructures and social amenities which serve as constraints to socio-economic development. This however, is with disregard to the efforts made by the ministries of agriculture and rural development and other rural development agencies at both federal and state level set up by different administrations to tackle the undeveloped state of the rural areas.

As an effort to improve on the plight of rural dwellers in the country generally, the federal government in the past set up poverty alleviation agencies with the objective of promoting food security, health security, financial sustainability, productive self-employment and support poor people's initiatives. The extent to which this has alleviated the conditions of the poor in Obudu and or brought about socio-economic

development of the rural communities has not been made bare. Rural communities in Nigeria in general, because of their characteristic problems have been in the political center of all policies. However, it is doubtful if rural communities in general and the poor in particular have benefited much from such policies. In other words, the efforts of political leaders at the three tiers of government to address the problems of rural communities is yet to yield the desired result. Rather the provision of essential facilities that could lead to the improvement of the standard of living of the citizenry is more or less concentrated in the urban centres (Ikpe, 2002). This on the whole has called for positive action if the rural communities must exist as an integral part of the larger society. Given the seeming failure of government and her agencies to address the observed problems in our society, and given the presence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Development in Nigeria (DIN) which collaborates with concerned universal (CU), and the funding agency – The European Union (EU), and Lift Above Poverty (LAPO) in

our society especially in Obudu, one would expect that their impacts be felt with regards to the social and economic development of our rural areas. However, the impact is not clearly seen and constitutes a source of worry to many including the researcher. The European Union (EU) is an international agency which has played profound role of sponsorship of most of the development projects inspite of their own private projects. Lift Above Poverty (LAPO) which came into existence in Obudu between 1995 and 2009 operates from the community development office in the Local Government Council Secretariat, this NGO provides credit facilities with insignificant interest rates with the aim of boosting the capital base of the rural women and empowering their economic base.

Poor standard of living, poor states of infrastructures and so on are the common features of Obudu Local government Area and its people. This buttresses the need for collaborative support of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations as well as civil society organizations, to see to it that the problem is tackled. It is in the light of this that this study explores the activities of NGOs such as Development in Nigeria (DIN), Concerned Universal (CU), Lift above poverty (LAPO) the funding agency European Union (EU) in relation to socio-economic development of rural communities in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to examine the activities of non-governmental organizations and the socioeconomic development of Obudu Local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The objectives in specific terms include;

- To find out the level of NGOs involvement in education of the rural people and how this has affected the socio-economic development of the people
- To examine whether NGOs involvement in rural people capacity development in agriculture has any effect on the socio-economic development of the people.

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

This study is guided by the following hypotheses.

- There is no significant effect of NGOs involvement in the education of the rural people on socio-economic development with respect to the income generation abilities of the people.
- There is no significant effects of NGOs involvement in rural people Capacity development in agriculture on socio-economics development with respect to improved yields/the provision or feeder roads in Obudu Local government area.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the relationship between NGOs' activities and socio-economic development of Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. NGOs covered here work collaboratively and include, Development in Nigeria (DIN), Concern Universal (CU) and Lift above Poverty (LAPO). The variables under consideration include: agricultural development, education and vocational capacity building and development. Besides the foregone, the study concern itself with how NGOs involvement in the aforementioned activities influence or affect socio-economic development of rural communities in Obudu with specific reference to improve yields construction, income generation abilities of the rural people and improved overall standard of living of the people. In other words, these activities are specific indicators of socio-economic development covered in this investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

NGOs Involvement in Education and Socio-Economic Development

According to Agi (2009), "child education is fundamental in increasing per capita income, sustaining democracies, improving health, and conserving environmental resources of nations. Hence, many NGOs see education as not an end in itself but a productive investment which justifies the investment of both private and public and (NGOs) investment in the sector. Sulie (2000) argued that the single most important key to poverty alleviation and development is education, no matter the form it takes. According to King and Palmer (2007) in Ullerberg (2009) "there is a long-standing evidence that the effects of schooling on

productivity (and hence incomes and poverty reduction) is much more marked when there is a dynamic, supportive environment surrounding schools. Similarly, Babalola, Tayo, Okerdiran, Ayeni, & Adedeji, (2006), argued in favor of the private sector especially NGOs' involvement in education, which hinges primarily on the theory of human capital, which states that education is an investment in human beings, which increases productivity and hence recipients' earnings. Like physical capital, human capital has four main characteristics; namely, it is capable of reproducing itself with time; its pay-off time is long; the building-up time is equally long and costly (say about 18 years for medicine), and it depreciates with time.

Ajadi, Adebisi & Alabi, (2010) examined the effort of women organizations (NGOs) in improving environmental education and economic empowerment of people in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study covers 50 rural settlements with 250 structured questionnaires distributed across same number of purposively-selected respondents in the study area. The result of their shows that 2% of respondents can read, write and understand Yoruba and English languages. They lack funds, special training to improve their practical indigenous expertise and talents in local economies. Nearly 47% have access to telephone but less than 25% have access to radio or television and none belongs to any registered governmental or non-governmental organizations. The study recommends the provision of viable infrastructure through government developmental assistance and funding from international partners to educate rural women on how to increase yield on their farms as well as undertake adult, community and environmental education, trainings in health and family planning. These are crucial to government's drive to break the cycle of poverty and reverse environmental degradation.

NGOs Involvement in Capacity Development and Socio-Economic Development

According to Pritchett, (2004) "Capacity development' has gradually become the centre of attention in the development discourse over the past few years, and it constitutes an increasingly important strategy in development. Today, capacity development is a fundamental part of the mandates of many international organizations. Pritchett (2004) further maintained "that much of NGOs works aims to

strengthen national capacities through training, technical advice, exchange of experiences, research, and policy advice. NGOs have become the main service providers in countries where the government is unable to fulfill up to 100% of its primary role. NGOs are increasingly involved in capacity development, committed to working towards social, economic, or political development in developing countries."

A study by Mubarak (2005) on Women Development Project in Tamil Nadu concluded "that in 1991 to 1992 the Tamil Nadu Women Development Project started on an experimental basis in Dharmapuri district with external funding from International fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). As at 2004 the membership has crossed 27.50 Lakhs women in 162,139 SHGs with 126,204 rural SHGs and 35,735 urban SHGs. The self-help groups have mobilized a saving of Rs.439.34crores."

Subha (2005) in his study on micro financing in India, pointed out that NGOs are engaged in the socioeconomic development of rural communities, he further submitted that an estimate of 800 to 1000 NGOs are involved in mobilizing savings and providing micro-loan services to the poor in the region. Now the NGOs' micro finance sector has started providing significant 'user friendly' services to the poor. NGOs link the self-help groups with the commercial banks for offering better financial help.

Similarly, Nikkhah & Ma'rof Bin, (2010) determined the impact of Non-Government Organization (NGOs) approaches on the empowerment of women in Shiraz, Iran. They opined that through empowerment, women become able to organize themselves, to increase self-reliance and to assert their independent right to make choices and control resources. Their study based on 195 women participants in NGO's activities also showed that their level of empowerment is moderate. The study concludes that the bottom-up approach is the most effective approach on the empowerment of women.

Jegede, Kehinde, James & Babatunde (2011) investigated the empirical relationship between microfinance loan disbursement and poverty alleviation in Lagos, Nigeria using chi-square test, F-test and T-test. The findings of their study revealed that there is a significant difference between those people who used

microfinance institutions and those who do not use them. There is a significant effect of microfinance institutions in alleviating poverty by increasing income and changing economic status of those who patronize them. They study concludes that microfinance institution is indeed a potent strategy of poverty reduction and a viable tool for purveying credit to the poor.

Akpabio (2007) in a study of socio-economic characteristics of Women Non-Governmental Organizations (WNGOs) beneficiaries in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, ascertained the contributions of WNGOs to improvements in beneficiaries' socio-economic status, identified factors affecting WNGOs success with Local Women Groups (LWGs) A sample size of 120 respondents from 24 LWGs, which are affiliated to three active WNGOs in the study area, was utilized for the study. Results derived from both descriptive and inferential statistical analytical tools, revealed that WNGOs cater for a broad spectrum of needy rural women, majority of them has benefited from WNGOs in terms of increased income generation, health awareness and skills acquisition. .

Theoretical Foundation

The integrated rural development theory was propounded by Hallet (1996). He maintained that development is multidimensional and encompassing, which includes the .02crops we have sown, the goods we sold and the road along which it is transported to the market by the trader, the school attended by our children and the disease affecting our babies. The theory considers development to be a comprehensive and holistic strategy, involving the improvement of the entire rural economy. In other words, the central idea of the theory which also lends credence and forms a framework for the this study is that rural areas has to broaden through efforts to mobilize and better utilize human and natural resources by providing services; by creating motivation and purchasing power through better distribution of income, employment opportunities; by establishing closer links between the agricultural, industrial and service sector in the rural areas; and by improving the conditions of living regarding socio-economic activities through assistance of NGOs.

The implication of this theory is that development is wholesome and needs the

participation of all components of the society. This follows from the position of the theory that development is divergent and includes virtually all that is done in the society.

The theory is holistic in the explanation of the socio-economic issues discussed with emphasis on the direction of this study despite some observed theoretical criticism. It explains development variables such as agriculture, vocational/capacity building, as well as educational development of the rural dwellers and society.

Also, it advocates that development strategy must be multi-dimensional, covering improved provision of services, enhanced opportunities for income generation through capacity building, improving infrastructure, especially educational infrastructure and improving agriculture through modern agricultural technology. The focus of NGOs is on facilitating change in rural areas to help the rural vulnerable improve their capacity, to earn more, invest in themselves and their communities, contribute towards maintenance of the infrastructure, key to their livelihoods; and to identify opportunities and act on them.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study the ex-post facto research design shall be employed. Ex-post facto research according to Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim & Ekuri (2004) is a kind of study in which causes are studied after variables have presumably exerted their effects on the other variable. Given that the various NGOs used in this study have been on ground and carrying out their different activities and the essence of this study is to find out how these affect socio-economic development, the most applicable design is therefore ex-post factor.

Study Area

The research area is Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State. It covers an area of 379.164 square kilometer. It lies between latitude 6°40 "30" North and longitude 8°41 "0" East and 9°11 "0", Obudu shares boundary with Obanliku Local Government Area to the east, to the west with Ogoja Local Government Area, to the south with Boki Local Government Area and to the north with Benue State. Obudu Local Government Area is made up of five indigenous communities namely, Alege, Bette, Ubang,

Ukpe and Utugwang. Politically, Obudu has ten wards, headed by councilors. These council wards are spread in the five autonomous communities aforementioned. The area is a small component of the old Ogoja province. According to the National Population Commission (2006) Obudu Local Government Area has a population of 161,457. The population used for are all categories of persons in Obudu who have benefited from the various NGOs under study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study was made up of 400 respondents (male and female) which were randomly selected from the entire study area. The ten wards of Obudu Local Government Area formed the clusters from which ten communities were selected. The communities selected include: Kukoshie, Kutiang, Bebuabung, Kakum, Nkirira, Okikwo, Okorogung, Ukwel-Obudu, Okorutung, Bayobri. These communities were selected using simple random sampling approach. To do this, the researcher wrote the names of the various communities in each ward wherein NGOs activities or presence is felt (which of course takes into consideration the geographic spread of the area) on sheets of paper ball; mixed these paper balls well in a container (hat) and blindly drew the communities for the study. In each of the ten communities selected (representing the ten wards), accidental sampling technique was employed to select forty (40) respondents (20 males and 20 females).

In other words, the first twenty males and first twenty females to be seen in each of the communities were administered with the research instrument. This gave the total of four hundred (400) respondents used in the study.

Instrument of Data Collection

The instrument used in collecting data for this study is the questionnaire and the questionnaire was structured to contain two sections. Section “A” contained questions designed to collect data in respect of the demographic status of respondents, while the section “B” contained questions designed to collect data about NGOs and the socio-economic development of the rural people. Section “B” was structured with some open ended and closed ended questions.

Method of Data Analysis

To test the hypotheses directing the study, each hypothesis was stated in the null form; the variables as well as the appropriate statistical analytical techniques adopted.

RESULTS

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis of the study stated in its null form that there is no significant effect of NGOs involvement in education of the rural people on socio-economic development through income generation abilities of the people. Here, the extent of involvement of the NGOs in education of the rural people (which is the independent variable) was seen in the light of being either high or low. Thus, these two levels of involvement of the NGOs were compared with respect to how they bring about a positive change in the income generation abilities of the rural people. To do this, independent t-test was employed (given that the dependent variable was continuous in nature). The summary of the analysis is as shown in Table 1.

Table1: Result of independent t-test analysis of the effect of NGOs involvement in education of the rural people on socio-economic development through the income generation abilities of the people

Involvement in education	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value
High	369	54.55	4.78	
				16.70*
Low	31	43.74	3.40	

* $P < 0.05$, $df = 398$, critical $t = 1.96$

In Table 1, the calculated t-value which represents the effect of extent of involvement of NGOs in education of the rural people is equal to 16.70. This is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with 398 degree of freedom. On the basis of this result, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained. The meaning of this result is that NGOs involvement in education of the rural people exerts significant effects on the socio-economic development of the rural communities, especially with respect to the income generation abilities of the rural people.

Hypothesis Two

In the null form, this hypothesis stated that there is no significant influence of NGOs involvement

in capacity building/training on socio-economic development through the improved overall standard of living of the rural people. The independent variable is NGOs measure of involvement was seen to be either high or low. The dependent variable on the other hand is socio-economic development (with specific reference to the improved overall standard of living of the rural people). To test this hypothesis, independent t-test was used as summarized in table 2

Table2: Result of independent t-test analysis of the effect of level of NGOs involvement in capacity building/training on socio-economic development through the improved overall standard of living

Level of involvement in capacity building	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value
High	345	55.50	5.84	24.96*
Low	55	41.96	4.94	

* $P < 0.05$, $df = 398$, critical $t = 1.96$

As shown in Table 15, the calculated t-value is 24.96. This represents the observed measure of the effects of NGOs involvement in vocational capacity building on socio-economic development through improved overall standard of living of the rural people. Since the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with 398 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained. The meaning of this is that NGOs involvement in capacity building/training exerts significant effect on the overall improved standard of living of the rural people.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

NGOs Involvement in Education and Socio-Economic Development

The result of the test of the second hypothesis is that there is effect of NGOs involvement in education of the rural people on their income generation abilities of the people of Obudu. The implication of these findings is that with the activities of NGOs in the study area, the income generation abilities of the people have increased. This is to say that the rural people have in one way or the other been empowered to generate more income for themselves. This will on the whole on their economic status as well as lead to a positive change in the status of the rural community as a whole.

In the in-depth interviews, Mr. Peter Orim a 41 year old discussant male (teacher) from Bayobri

community mentioned that “NGOs have contributed greatly in education by providing educational facilities like the renovations of class room blocks and provision of furniture desk”. Another discussant, Mrs. Veronica Adie, a 48 year female (teacher) from Ukwel-Obudu community also mentioned that “NGOs have provided and a new building in her school and have also helped in the educating the other members of the community on improved farming methods and products. The fact that this will better the lives of the people as well as aid their income generation abilities cannot be ruled out.

Also, another discussant, Adie Linus Agba, a 16 year old male (student) from Kakum community stated that (NGOs have renovated class room block and provided furniture desks in this school and that his parents are also part of the adult literacy programme”. Another discussant, Miss Ugim Favour, a 15 year old female (student) from Bebuabong community equally stated that (NGOs have provided books and other learning materials to my school and its has helped greatly in facilitating desired teaching-learning outcome”.

This finding is in agreement with Ibembe (2007) in Ulleberg, (2009) who maintained that NGOs provide a large part of educational service and help reinforce government efforts in achieving universal primary education (UPE) objectives. The finding is in consonant with Ariyo (1991) in Ullerberg, (2009) who observed that non-governmental organizations activities complement government efforts in educational development through their provision of some basic educational facilities which range from the provision of computers, furniture, buildings, science laboratory equipment and apparatus aimed at facilitating learning in a conducive environment and in turn bring about socio-economic development in the rural sector. Given that education is power, this finding is not a deviation from reality as it is natural that with better education, the populace will generate more income compared to when they have not had such education.

NGOs Involvement in Vocational Capacity Building and Socio-Economic Development

The result of the third hypothesis is that there is a significant influence or effects of NGOs involvement in vocational capacity building on the socio-economic development of the people

of Obudu in respect to improved overall standard of living.

In the in-depth interviews, Mr. Akomaye Abantelhe, a 32 year old discussant male (farmer) from Kukorshie community again mentioned that “NGOs have provided facilities in the form of micro-finance to boost and encourage small scale business. The cousin in Mgbenege was among the first set of beneficiaries and I thank NGOs for this massive contribution to rural communities”. Another discussant, Mr. Denis Awhen, a 44 year old male (trader) from Okorugung community also mentioned that “NGOs have trained some people in the community on skill acquisition such as tailoring, operating the garri processing machine, market gardening, method of fuel economy in cooking among others which are all geared toward capacity building and income is being generated and this in-turn bring about socio-economic development among the people in the area. The effects of this on the overall improved standard of living of the people cannot be overstated. Virtually, there is progress in the regard of increase in per capita income.

Another discussant, Mrs. Agede Ugim, a 38 year old female (trader) from Nkirira community also mentioned that “NGOs have trained members of her community on small scale business management and also provided financial facilities in form of micro-finance with low interest rate; she gave instance of her friend.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the findings of this study, the study concluded that NGOs play significant roles in the socio-economic development of the society in general and rural communities in particular. They therefore need to be encouraged and given a leveled ground in this regards. The study thereby recommends that;

- The federal, State and local governments should provide a conducive environment for NGOs to operate in rural communities as their presence will likely bring the development of the society.
- Rural communities should mobilize themselves and attract relevant NGOs to be operational in their communities.
- When NGOs come, the needed assistance and cooperation should be given them to ensure that they are functional.

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