

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND POVERTY REDUCTION AMONG THE PEOPLE OF OBANLIKU, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to examine the effect of development projects on poverty reduction in semi-indigenous communities of Obanliku local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Survey method was adopted that utilised structured questionnaire administered to 300 respondents using a combination of sampling techniques. Data gathered were analysed using Pearson product moment correlation analysis. Result revealed that development projects such as – potable water, electrification, and educational projects have direct bearing with poverty reduction among Obanliku people of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study recommended among others that government at all levels should develop new and expands its policy framework on water supply, rural electrification and educational projects.

Keywords: Development projects, poverty reduction, Obanliku people

INTRODUCTION

Rural development in Nigeria has remained a high profile challenge to government both in the military and democratic dispensations. Since the inception of democracy in 1999, different rural development projects have been put in place by governments at all levels in order to stimulate and accelerate good living standards in rural areas. Regrettably, records continue to show that, vital rural development projects such as electrification projects, water projects, education projects, healthcare delivery projects, etc. are in dilapidated state, showing backwardness in projects implementation. According to Ikurekong and Atse (2013), over seventy (70) percent of rural dwellers live below poverty level, low life expectancy and poor standard of living especially among rural populace (Agba, Akpanudoedehe, & Ocheni, 2014). It is assumed that projects implementation is not unconnected to rural development in Nigeria and specifically in Obanliku Local Government Area.

Obanliku is one of the eighteen local government areas of Cross River State Nigeria that is experiencing rural underdevelopment. Thus, several rural development projects have been carried out to reduce poverty level and enhance living standards among Obanliku people. These projects include electrification projects, potable water projects, education projects, healthcare delivery projects etc. Olatunbosun (2005) and Tamuno (2005), in Ikelegbe (2005) reported that rural development projects have been implemented in several communities in Nigeria. However, Agba (2006) and Agba, Ocheni and Nkpoyen (2014) reported that despite the execution of rural development projects in rural communities, the condition of the people has not been improved. This may be blamed on factors such as corruption, lack of proper coordination, misplaced projects and the exclusion of the rural populace in project determination, planning and implementation. The provisions of these rural development projects and its implementation in Obanliku local government have not transformed the socioeconomic life of the people. It is for this reason that this research is carried out to find out if government projects implementation relates to poverty reduction among Obanliku people of Cross River State. The specific areas of considerations include electrification projects, potable water projects and education projects. Consequently, the research is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- (i) Examine the relationship between implementation of electrification projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people;
- (ii) Determine the relationship between implementation of potable water projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people;
- (iii) Investigate the relationship between implementation of education projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Electrification projects and poverty reduction

Rural development is the process of bringing electrical power to rural and remote areas. Thus electricity is used not only for lighting and household purpose, but it also allows for mechanization of man) farming operations such as threshing, milking and hoisting grain for storage (Ikelegbe, 2005). According to Bongani (2013), rural electrification has been the cornerstone of rural energy programmes in developing countries. Electricity has provided a safe and efficient energy source for residential and public lighting, pumping, drinking water, irrigation, refrigeration, rural industries and many others. Jude (2014). reported that the Cross River State Government's rural electrification project has provided 11 boost to industrial activities in rural communities. besides providing employment for young men and women.

Anyanwu (2014), in his study and found out that the implementation of rural electrification projects is the tonic of economic activities. This project allows the small and medium scale

business such as business centres and other spring up in different communities. Thus rural electrification remains the singular project that has so far made a difference in the lives of rural populace (Anyanwu, 2009). It holds the key to man's income yielding activities. Since it is pivotal to all economic activities electricity like water is life. Without it the wheels of progress will not turn and development will be stagnant (Jude, 2014). In global conference on Rural Energy Access (2013) reported that the implementation of rural electrification projects ensures adequate power to promote and support small scale power-dependent economic activities in rural communities. The government of the area has intervened in the area of electrification through the donation of electricity transforms and electricity generating sets to various rural communities.

According to Sylvester (2006), the mandate of the rural electrification projects: setting target for a number of communities that can be electrified; qualifying and evaluating all material requirement of the electrification projects of the community; enumerating number of households, industries and projects that would require electric supply in the community. Akpama (2005) asserted that adequate and reliable supply of all forms of energy is vital to economic growth and sustainable development. In his study on rural electrification projects and implementation process, he reported that various forms of energy have to be produced in adequate proportion and brought to the point of consumption to drive economic growth and development of rural communities. The electrification projects which seek to tackle community need of electrification have successfully changed the landscape of rural communities (Ekong, 2003). Agba (2006) asserted that electricity supply to communities on a regular and consistent basis attracts small scale business that use local raw materials as the base to any location. The results on a number of studies indicate that rural electrification has successfully reduced overheads, increased profits and to a greater extent encouraged sustainability in the rural communities (Battein, 2003).

Potable water projects and poverty reduction

Ensuring a safe and sustainable water supply in rural areas is of fundamental importance for rural development all over the world. Access to basic water and sanitation services is a crucial right, vital for development and the reduction of rural poverty (Kruskopf, 2014; Agba, Agba, Ushie & Akwara, 2009). Potable water is a basic necessity of life. Nkpoyen and Bassey (2013) asserted that water is needed in all human activities. Its importance in enhancing the wellbeing of the rural class cannot be overstressed. Water quality is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Farmers employ diverse measures to protect water quality such as recycling waste with innovative systems (Ojo, 2001).

Anarn (2011) reported that since 2002. UNICEF's integrated growth and development programme in Nigeria has created about 4,000 new safe water resources across the country, providing safe water for more than 1 million. The programme was implemented in collaboration

with the rural water supply and sanitation agencies. According to Dele (2006), access to potable water is significantly important and the government must ensure that it is accessible to all its citizens if quality rural healthcare must be enhanced and achieved.

Essien (2004) in Udom (2006), asserted that water project is one of the rural development project implemented in almost all rural communities in Nigeria which Obanliku local government is inclusive. He asserted that 'rural water supply projects in rural areas in Nigeria include setting standards for a number of communities that can benefit from water supply per annum. Undertaking logical survey of surface and underground water sources of the community, recommending most suitable water supply option for the community based on critical assessment of available options; estimating volumetric daily potable water, requirement or the community taking into account domestic business and industries demands; assessing the likely impact of the potable water supply on health, social and economic life of the people and industrial development in rural community, recommending best distribution options for communal water supply, estimate cost of providing the community with water supply through the recommended option, preparing comprehensive feasibility report for water supply to the community taking into account all relevant factors including sources of water, sources of funding, material requirements, technical and financial feasibility and cost benefit analysis (Nkpoyen, 2006).

According to UNDP (2006), in Federal Republic of Nigeria Gazette (2007) only 60 percent of households have access to improved drinking water sources while access to adequate sanitation facilities remains low, more than half the populations have no access to clean water. and many women and children walk for hours a day to fetch it. Due to the increasing occurrence of water stress and scarcity, increasing variations and uncertainties in weather patterns, deterioration in water quality and the mismanagement of water, there is an urgent demand for innovative technologies approaches and solutions through implementation of rural water project in affected rural communities in Obanliku (Akpama, 2005).

Educational projects and poverty reduction

Education to all intents and purposes, is seen as an instrument of advancement, social change, economic and political progress. It is the key that unlocks the door to modernisation and national development. This might have informed nations which have continue to invest heavily in the education of their citizens since no nation can achieve any meaningful development without using education as the bedrock (Olugbodi, 2000). Battein (2003) asserted that in a world driven by brain power, education is a vital and inevitable tool for national development. It is an instrument for effective manpower development and social transformation. Akpama (2005) observed that education has received a significant boost as a pivot on rural development projects in Obanliku. Akpama (2005) reported that rural educational projects implementation in Obanliku

encompasses programmes of activities which enhance potentialities of members of the community.

Akpama (2005) found that prior to 1999, education in Cross River State was characterized lack of instructional materials, physical facilities and trained teacher, Akpama reported from his study on education projects and rural development north, that students especially at primary school level were found learning on bare floor and other unhealthy environment. He stressed that the state border communities development commission (Bordercom) projects in the area of education emphasises mass literacy, manpower development, eradication of poverty, ignorance and disease, and the desire to build vibrant and socio-economic development.

Rowat (2002) Cross Rive newspaper article of (March 2013) maintained that communities have benefited immensely from Bordercom projects in the area of education as it promotes physical infrastructure. furniture and science equipment for schools in rural communities. Rural educational development projects include the construction and rehabilitation of classroom blocks, dormitories quarters for teachers, classroom desks for primary and secondary schools (Akpan 2006). Udorn (2006) reported that in Bendigie village, Bendi Ward I educational projects has been effectively implemented by government. The completed rural education project includes construction of six classroom blocks and 140 classroom desks for public schools in Bendi Ward. The education projects aimed at enhancing education and manpower development through the provision of comfortable and convenient learning environment. The construction and rehabilitation of room blocks, halls and staff quarters as well as provision of writing desk and benches have brought about comfortable and conducive teaching and learning environment for pupils, students and teachers. It is estimated that the increase in the number of newly built classroom blocks, which comprises five and six rooms respectively, completion of abandoned ones as well as renovation of rehabilitation of dilapidated classroom buildings in Obanliku has led to a corresponding increase in school enrolment and employment of additional teachers in line with improved infrastructure and enhanced capacity (Akpan, 2006). Education projects have helped to improve the quality of life of rural dwellers through provision of relevant information to rural communities (Okeh, 2002) in Ayanwu (2009).

The enrolment of wards in school is essential to eradicated poverty due to ignorance. It is also an empowerment process that prepares the children and youths as future leaders. The good thing is that CSDP intervention is needs based and thus has potential for sustainability. In Cross River State, over 98 percent of support has gone to rural and indigent communities with evident need for development and poverty reduction. Some or the beneficiary communities include Obanliku, communities had no school of theirs before intervention but rather trek to distant communities to attend schools. Others had school but never had science laboratories for study of science subjects. This affected their enrolment for certificate examinations like West African

Examination Council (WAEC) or National Examination Council NECO. Thus, science students during period of examination had the choice of discounting or enrolled in another school distant from the community. There was therefore an evident problem of access that CSDP has since corrected in such communities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social capital theory

The major proponent of this theory is Dewey (1899). The appearance of the modern social capital conceptualization is a new way to look at the debate of keeping together the importance of community to build generalized trust and sometime, the importance of individual free choice; in order to create a more cohesive society. It is against this backdrop that social capital theory generated so much interest in the academic and political world. Therefore, social capital theory identifies consensus building as a direct positive indicator of social capital. Consensus implies shared interest and agreement among various actors and stakeholders to induce collective action. Collective action is thus an indication of increased social capital.

Social capital theory has implications for the present study as regards to government project implementation without social capital in the area of electrification, potable water and education, the significant impacts on rural development can rely on these factors. With the contribution of the government in rural electrification, potable water and education, has given them less opportunity and participation in rural activities. One of the most important factors that promote rural development is the active involvement of government with collaboration with the rural people themselves to facilitate electrification, provision of potable water supply and quality education for rural dwellers. Thus, government involvement contributes to social capital of the community.

The use of social capital has been criticized. The theory overemphasized the need of government to provide everything needed by the people of rural community without realizing that there are resources that are naturally endowed which already existed in the community like land, sea, river etc. The social capital theory failed to address the issue of government project implementation and how it facilitates rural development in the study area.

Participatory development model

The major proponent of this model is Chambers (1983). According to the proponents of this model local populations are to be actively participating or engage in development problems, policy formulation and projects implementation. Participatory development model is a model that has taken a variety of forms since it emerged in the 1970s approach to development. Chambers popularised within development circles such phrases as “putting the last first” and

stressed the new generally accepted need for development. Most manifestation of participatory development seek to give the poor a part in initiatives designed for their benefit in the hopes that will be more sustainable and successful if local populations are engaged in the development process. Therefore, participatory rural development model is presented as an alternative to mainstream top-down development. This participatory rural development model is a bottom-up approach that involves extensive discussions, conversations and decision making with the target community participatory rural development model has implications for this present stud; on project implementation and rural development. This model holds the view that the implementation stage of rural development projects requires increased rent relevance and sustainability. Rural development projects in the areas of electrification, water supply, healthcare delivery, roads constructing, education etc., require community involvement for its sustainability and implementation.

This model has been variously criticized for being costly and slow. The critics of this model assume that a project may take longer one has to engage, work and come to a consensus with local communities than if one did not have to do these things. Therefore, the overemphasizing on the relevance of participation in development project allows this model faced theoretical flaws.

METHODOLOGY

Survey design was adopted which allows for the use of questionnaire. This contained 20-items and was divided into two sections. The first section deals with variables such as rural electrification, potable water, and educational projects (Attah, Agba & Nkpoyen, 2013). The second section; that is section B, was concerned with items on the dependent variable, which is poverty reduction among the people of Obanliku. Items were measured using 4-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was administered to 300 respondents who were selected using Taro Yamane formula. Three sampling procedures (cluster, purposive, and systematic sampling techniques) were adopted for selecting villages and streets for the study. Data collected from the study was analysed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis was done based on three hypotheses selected to guide the study. Results were reported in tables.

RESULTS

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between electrification projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people. The independent variable on this hypothesis is electrification projects while the dependent variable is poverty reduction. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistical tool was used for data analysis. The result of the analysis (see table 1) therefore revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.337 was found to be greater than the critical r-value of

0.195 needed for significance at 0.05 level, with 298 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between electrification projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant relationship between electrification projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people of Cross River State, Nigeria.

TABLE 1: Electrification projects and poverty reduction

(N = 300)

| Variable | $\sum X$ | $\sum X^2$ | $\sum XY$ | r-cal |
|------------------------------------|----------|------------|-----------|--------|
| | $\sum Y$ | $\sum Y^2$ | | |
| Electrification projects (X_1) | 1126 | 4248 | 4243 | 0.337* |
| Poverty reduction (Y) | 1129 | 4261 | | |

Significant at $P < 0.05$, $df = 298$, Crit-r = 0.195

Hypothesis two

There is no significant relationship between potable water projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people. The independent variable on this hypothesis is potable water projects while the dependent variable is poverty reduction. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistical tool was used for data analysis. The result of the analysis (see table 2) therefore revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.401 was found to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.195 needed for significance at 0.05 level, with 298 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between potable water projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant relationship between potable water projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people of Cross River State, Nigeria.

TABLE 2: Potable water projects and poverty reduction

(N = 300)

| Variable | ΣX | ΣX^2 | ΣXY | r-cal |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|--------|
| | ΣY | ΣY^2 | | |
| Potable water projects (X_2) | 1131 | 4275 | | |
| | | | 4261 | 0.401* |
| Poverty reduction (Y) | 1129 | 4261 | | |

Significant at $P < 0.05$, $df = 298$, $Crit-r = 0.195$

Hypothesis three

There is no significant relationship between education projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people. The independent variable on this hypothesis is education projects while the dependent variable is poverty reduction. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistical tool was used for data analysis. The result of the analysis (see table 3) therefore revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.341 was found to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.195 needed for significance at 0.05 level, with 298 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between education projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant relationship between education projects and poverty reduction among Obanliku people of Cross River State, Nigeria.

TABLE 3: Education projects and poverty reduction

(N = 300)

| Variable | $\sum X$ | $\sum X^2$ | $\sum XY$ | r-cal |
|--------------------------------------|----------|------------|-----------|--------|
| | $\sum Y$ | $\sum Y^2$ | | |
| Education projects (X ₃) | 1129 | 4256 | | |
| | | | 4252 | 0.341* |
| Poverty reduction (Y) | 1129 | 4261 | | |

Significant at P<0.05, df = 298, Crit-r = 0.195

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Electrification projects and poverty reduction

Findings obtained from analysis and testing of hypothesis one showed that the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between electrification projects and poverty reduction in Obanliku local government area. The findings of this hypothesis is in line with the work of (Ikelegbe, 2005) who reported that in Obanliku, electrification projects allow for greater productivity at reduced cost. The study also supports the findings of Jude (2014) who reported that the Cross River State Government's rural electrification project has provided a boost to industrial activities in rural communities, besides providing employment for young men and women.

This finding is in agreement with the finding of Jude (2014) that the implementation of rural electrification projects is the tonic of economic activities in Obanliku. This project allows the small and medium scale business such as business centres and other spring up in different communities. The finding is in line with Akpoviro (2009) in global conference on Rural Energy Access (2015) who reported that the implementation of rural electrification projects in Obanliku has been to ensure adequate power to promote and support small scale power - dependent economic activities in Obanliku rural communities. The government of the area has intervened in the area of electrification through the donation of electricity transformers and electricity generating sets to various rural communities in Obanliku. The findings of this hypothesis agreed with Agba (2006) that electricity supply to communities on a regular and consistent basis attracts small scale business that use local raw materials as the base to any location. Battein (2003) posed

that rural electrification has successfully reduced overheads, increased profits and to a greater extent encourage sustainability in the rural communities.

Potable water projects and poverty reduction

Findings obtained from analysis and testing of hypothesis two showed that the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is a significant relationship between potable water and poverty reduction in Obanliku local government area. The findings of this hypothesis strongly supported the work of Essen (2004) in Udom (2006) who reported that water projects are one of the rural development project implemented in almost all rural communities. These include setting standards for a number of communities that can benefit from water supply per annum undertaking logical survey of surface and underground water sources of the community, recommending most suitable water supply option for the community based on critical assessment of available options, estimating volumetric daily potable water requirement of the community into account domestic business and industrial demands, assessing the likely impact of the potable water supply on health, social and the economic life of the people and industrial development in rural communities.

The finding is in agreement with Dele (2006) who categorically stated that access to potable water is significantly important and the government must ensure that it is accessible to all its citizens if quality rural healthcare must be enhanced and achieved. The findings more than the half of the population of people have no access to clean water and many women and children walk for hours a day to fetch it. Due to the increasing occurrence of water stress and scare ty increasing variations and uncertainties in weather patterns. determination in water quality and the mismanagement of water, there is an urgent demand for innovative technologies approaches and solutions through implementation of rural water project in affected rural communities in Obanliku.

Education projects and poverty reduction

Findings obtained from analysis and testing of hypothesis three showed that the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternate hypothesis. This means that there is a significant relationship between education projects and poverty reduction in Obanliku local government area. The findings of this hypothesis agreed with Akpama (2005) who observed that education has received a significant boost as a pivot on rural development projects in Obanliku and the implementation of rural education projects encompasses programmes of activities which enhances potentialities of members of the community.

The findings of this hypothesis is in line with Rowat (2002) in Cross River article of May (2013) who found that rural communities in Nigeria specifically Obanliku Local Government Area has

benefited immensely from Bordercom projects in the area of education as it promotes physical infrastructure, furniture and science equipment for schools in rural communities. The implementation of rural education projects aimed at enhancing education and manpower development through the provision of comfortable and convenient learning environment. The construction and rehabilitation of classroom blocks, halls and staff quarters as well as provision of writing desk and benches have brought about comfortable and conducive teaching and learning environment for pupils, students and teachers. The findings of this hypothesis agreed with Okeh (2002) in Anyanwu (2009) that education projects have helped to improve the quality of life of rural people through provision of relevant information to rural communities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rural electrification projects, provision of potable water and development of education is saving lives in many ways among Obanliku people of Cross River State, Nigeria. Electrification projects provides boost to individuals and groups wellbeing by generating employments for young people and women. It is a tonic to economic activities among a large section of people. It promotes and supports small scale enterprises and other socio-economic activities in Obanliku. Like-wise, the potable water project is helping in so many more ways in eradicating health challenges associated with poor drinking water. It promotes healthy living among Obanliku people and save time and resources for the locals of the region. Education projects are also supporting the wellbeing of Obanliku people by providing necessary skills for employment and social mobility. We recommended among others policy options which support more funding for electrification, water and educational projects among Obanliku people and the nation at large. More so, public-private partnership (PPP) should be encouraged by government to cover more communities and strengthen existing ones.

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