



Assessment of the contributions of Orlu local government area in community development in IMO state, Nigeria

Johnson Nnadi Ewelum^{1*}, Alexander Uzochukwu Ogbunugwor², Anthony Ahuruezenma Apiti³

¹⁻³ Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra, Nigeria

Abstract

This study assessed the contributions of Orlu local government area in community development in Imo State, Nigeria. Four research questions were raised to guide the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised of all the community leaders in the 13 communities that make up Orlu Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 145 community leaders selected through simple random sampling. A self-structured questionnaire titled 'Assessment of the contributions of Orlu local government area of Imo State, Nigeria in Community Development (ACOLGAISNCD)' was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by two experts, one from the Department of Adult and Continuing Education and the other in measurement and evaluation from the Department of Educational Foundations, all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. The reliability of the instrument was computed using Cronbach Alpha and it yielded a co-efficient of 0.78 and the instrument was therefore deemed reliable for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected. The findings of the study revealed that Orlu local government area contributed to low extent to agricultural production, infrastructural facilities and health care services for community development. It was also found that Orlu local government area contributed to high extent in education for community development. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that Orlu local government area should adopt bottom-up approach (participatory approach) in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of developmental programmes in rural communities.

Keywords: local government, community, development, community development

Introduction

The expediency for the creation of local government anywhere in the world stems from the need to facilitate development at the grassroots. The importance of local government is a function of its ability to generate sense of belongingness, safety and satisfaction among its populace (Olley, 2011) ^[15]. The author further noted that all forms of government, regimes or political systems have so far ensured the attainment of this goal. Such strategy for ensuring national administrative development and political efficacy is found in the concept and practice of local government. Whatever is the mode of government, local government has been essentially regarded as the path to and guarantor of national integration as well as community development. A local government is semi-autonomous territorial unit created by the constitution or general laws of a state to undertake certain functions within specified or limited geographical area. According to Agbakoba (2014) ^[4], a local government is a political and administrative unit that is empowered by law to administer a specified locality. It involves philosophical commitment to the idea of community participation in government at grassroots level. The Guidelines for Local Government Reforms in Nigeria of 1976 defined local government as a government at local level exercised through a representative council established by law to exercise specific powers and functions within defined areas. But for the purpose of this study, local government shall be defined as a third tier government with adequate statutory power designed to transmit the pulse and activities of other arms of government to the people at the grassroots and at the same time, transmit the quest and

aspiration of the rural people to those other arms of government.

Local government is therefore seen as an avenue for training and inculcating habits of democracy in the grassroots. Abutudu (2011) ^[2] averred that these habits of democracy are construed to include participation, mobilization, accountability and responsiveness and of course, self-governability. However, from the perspective of the efficiency-services school, the appropriate functional focus of local government should be the provision of services, and its success or failure has to be judged by this yardstick. The proximity of the Local government to the grassroots makes it, especially suited to provide certain functions far more efficiently and in a more cost-effective manner than the much more remote government at the higher level. It will be almost difficult, if not impossible, for the mere presence of such government to make a difference except if and only if it engages itself with the process of community development. The concept of community development, just like every other concept in the social sciences has no universal definition. Many authors defined it according to their perceptions. Richard in Abugu (2014) ^[1] defined community development as a movement to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and if possible, on the initiative of the community. Broadly speaking, Akukwe (2012) ^[5] noted that community development had been associated with names such as social education, mass education, functional education and rural constructive work. Sanders (2010) ^[17] affirmed that community development had been described as a fusion of community organization and economic development. Sequel

to this, Odiong as cited in Abugu (2014) ^[1] highlighted that the goals of community development should be to improve people's productivity and enable them to participate in their social, political and economic life into a brighter future. This would give them more confidence in managing their own affairs and help to protect their environment. Indeed, it is morally binding on the local government authorities to do everything possible to achieve the goals. In the light of the above, the principal objective of community development is for human, material and infrastructural development through effective mobilization of both human and material resources and by the active involvement of the rural populace. Out of the four principal objectives of the 1976 local government reform in Nigeria, two were devoted to achieving the objectives of community development *viz*: (i) to make appropriate services and initiatives by devolving or delegating them to the local representative bodies; (ii) to mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the community in their local development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2013). Development of the community means that the local government should contribute to the development of communities subsequently. Olowu (2013) ^[16] outlined the possible contributions of local government to the development process to include; political integration and nation building, training in citizenship and political leadership, promotion of accountable governance, and provision of social and economic development. This study, however, contends that the role of local government in the community development process stands in the triadic function of (a) as agent of mass mobilization; (b) as accelerating force for massive economic growth and development and; (c) agent of socio-economic equity. These three functions are not only of a great essence but also a *sine-qua non* for sustainable community and national development. Similarly, Imhabekhai (2009) listed some functions of local government to community development as in areas of distribution of amenities and social services, development of infrastructures and water, social welfare services, health services, education and among others. Unfortunately, the rate at which development is moving in rural communities in Orlu local government area, Imo State is not in par with other communities. For instance, there are epileptic electricity supply, bad road networks, non-construction of culverts and drainage system, improper waste management/ refuse disposal, irregular salary payment to health workers and primary school teachers, nonfunctional programme for farmers, insecurity of lives and properties, non-renovation of dilapidated school buildings, civic centers, among other problems that constitute gap which needs to be bridged. It is not certain if the local government has actually brought positive development to the rural communities, irrespective of the federal government allocation received monthly. One therefore, wonders whether the local government area personnel shy away from the objectives of which it was established or lack leadership qualities that would engender positive change. There is, therefore, the need to assess the contributions of the local government area to community development in Orlu Local Government Area, Imo State. Assessment in this study implies the systematic collection, processing and consideration of information from various sources in order to develop a clear understanding and pass

judgement on the contributions of local government area in community development. According to Hornby (2006) ^[9], assessment is an opinion or a feedback about something that has been thought very carefully. It is possible that if the local government's contributions to community development are assessed, the deterioration in the rate of development would be improved and this is what this study was set out to do.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to assess the contributions of Orlu local government areas in community development in Imo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to assess the extent of contributions of Orlu Local Government Area, Imo State, Nigeria on:

1. Agricultural production for community development.
2. Provision of infrastructural facilities for community development.
3. Provision of health facilities for community development.
4. Provision of education for community development.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent did Orlu local government area contribute to agricultural production for community development?
2. To what extent did Orlu local government area contribute to infrastructural facilities for community development?
3. To what extent did Orlu local government area contribute to health facilities for community development?
4. To what extent did Orlu local government area contribute to education for community development?

Materials and method

The design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of all the community leaders in the 13 communities that make up Orlu local government area. The sample consisted of 145 community leaders selected through simple random sampling. A self-structured questionnaire titled 'Assessment of the contributions of Orlu Local Government Area, Imo State, Nigeria in Community Development (ACOLGA ISNCD) was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by two experts, one from Department of Adult and Continuing Education and the other in measurement and evaluation from Department of Educational Foundations all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. Comments and recommendations were effected in the final construction of the instrument by the researchers. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach alpha and 0.78 was obtained and considered adequate for the study. The data collected was analyzed with mean and standard deviation. Decision rule was based on 4-point numerical values on the response modes assigned: Very High Extent (VHE)- 4 points, High Extent (HE)- 3 points, Low Extent (LE)- 2 points, and Very Low Extent (VLE)- 1 point. A criterion mean of 2.5 was adopted. This means that any mean score that is up to 2.5 and above was regarded as high extent while means below 2.5 were regarded as low extent.

Results**Research Question 1:** To what extent did Orlu local

government area contribute to agricultural production for community development?

Table 1: Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on the extent Orlu local government area contributed to agricultural production for community development.

S/N	How has Orlu Local Government Area contributed to the following	X	SD	Remarks
1	Provision of tractors	2.10	0.02	Low extent
2	Provision of husbandry	1.68	0.14	Low extent
3	Forestation of Economic trees	1.11	0.33	Low extent
4	Fishery	2.53	0.12	High extent
5	Farm irrigation	2.21	0.04	Low extent
6	Helping farmers to obtain viable seeds and seedlings	2.19	0.01	Low extent
7	Improving farmers' access to markets	2.39	0.64	Low extent
8	Provision of training and re-orientation of farmers	2.06	0.03	Low extent
9	Provision of fertilizers to farmers	2.68	0.17	High extent
10	Provision of grants and credit loans to farmers	2.10	0.02	Low extent
	Grand Mean	2.11		Low extent

The result in table 1 shows that items 4 & 9 were regarded as high extent by the respondents. This was because their means were greater than the criterion mean of 2.5 while the remaining 8 items were regarded as low extent by the respondents because their means, including the grand mean were less than the criterion mean of 2.5. This implies that

Orlu local government area contributed to low extent in agricultural production for community development.

Research Question 2: To what extent did Orlu local government area contribute to infrastructural facilities for community development?

Table 2: Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on the extent Orlu local government area contributed to infrastructural facilities for community development

S/N	How has Orlu Local Government Area contributed to the following:	X	SD	Remarks
11	Provision of secure and stable market environment where enterprises can flourish	2.51	0.03	High extent
12	Provision of physical infrastructure such as roads and waste management	2.43	0.03	Low extent
13	Addressing the need of the public for public health and child care	2.53	0.04	High extent
14	Provision of electricity in the communities	2.76	0.10	High extent
15	Provision of civic centres for community gathering	2.19	0.01	Low extent
16	Provision of pipe borne water for dwellers	2.39	0.04	Low extent
17	Empowering local vigilantes with basic security equipment	2.08	0.16	Low extent
	Grand Mean	2.40		Low extent

Data in table 2 shows that items 11, 13 & 14 were regarded as high extent by the respondents. This was because their means were greater than the criterion mean of 2.5 while the remaining 4 items were regarded as low extent by the respondents because their means, including the grand mean were less than the criterion mean. This implies that Orlu

local government area contributed to low extent in infrastructural facilities for community development.

Research Question 3: To what extent did Orlu local government area contribute to health care facilities for community development?

Table 3: Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on the extent Orlu local government area contributed to health care facilities for community development.

S/N	How has Orlu Local Government Area contributed to the following	X	SD	Remarks
18	Provision of drugs for fighting malaria	1.98	0.12	Low extent
19	Giving free anti-natal drugs for pregnant women	2.13	0.07	Low extent
20	Provision of immunization for polio eradication	2.58	0.09	High extent
21	Sensitization on proper refuse disposal	2.67	0.12	High extent
22	Renovation of public health centres	2.21	0.04	Low extent
23	Provision of basic medical equipment to nurses and doctors	2.37	0.02	Low extent
24	Free provision of long-lasting mosquito nets	2.35	0.01	Low extent
25	Recruitment of qualified personnel	2.39	0.64	Low extent
	Grand Mean	2.34		Low extent

Data in Table 3 shows that items 20 & 21 were regarded as high extent because their means were greater than the criterion mean of 2.5 while the remaining 6 items were regarded as low extent because their means, including the grand mean were lower than the criterion mean. This implies that Orlu local

government area contributed to low extent in health care facilities for community development.

Research Question 4: To what extent did Orlu local government Area contribute to education for community development?

Table 4: Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on the extent Orlu local government area contributed to education for community development.

S/N	How has Orlu Local government contributed to the following	X	SD	Remarks
25	Recruitment of qualified teachers	2.68	0.05	High extent
26	Provision of teaching materials	2.76	0.09	High extent
27	Renovation of dilapidated school buildings	2.25	0.13	Low extent
28	Supervision of schools	2.59	0.02	High extent
29	Teacher's development through seminars, workshops, short courses etc	2.46	0.04	Low extent
	Grand Mean	2.55		High extent

The data in table 4 shows that items 25, 26, & 28 were regarded as high extent by the respondents because their means, including the grand mean were greater than the criterion mean of 2.5 while items 27 & 29 were regarded as low extent because their means were less than the criterion mean. This implies that Orlu local government area contributed to high extent in education for community development.

Discussion

The findings in research question one revealed that Orlu local government contributed to low extent to community development based on agricultural production. This is because the respondents indicated that the Orlu local government only contributed to high extent in making provision for fishery and fertilizers for farmers. On the other hand, the respondents noted that Orlu local government contributed to low extent in provision for tractors, animal husbandry, forestation of economic trees; farm irrigation; helping farmers to obtain viable seeds and seedlings, improving farmers' access to market, providing training and re-orientation of farmers and provision of grants and credit loans to farmers. This finding agrees with the findings of Oladejo, Olawuyi and Anjorin (2011) ^[14] that some of the constraints facing agricultural production majorly include lack of capital and governmental support. Similarly, this finding is in line with the findings of Esan (2016) ^[6] who reiterated that through secondary data obtained and analyzed, there is inconsistency in finance of the agricultural sector in the local government where the capital budget for agriculture is distorted in many occasions. Contrarily, Oduro-Ofori (2011) ^[13] averred that the local government of the municipality promotes local economic development in various fields of activities including agriculture and provision of other social services. The varied findings may be as a result of change of geographical location and government will. The findings in research question two revealed that Orlu local government contributed to low extent in infrastructural facilities for community development. This is because the respondents indicated that Orlu local government contributed to high extent to community development based on provision of secure and stable market environment where enterprises are flourished, addressing the need for public health and child care and provision of electricity to communities. Nonetheless, the respondents rated that the local government contributed to low extent in infrastructural facilities provision for community development, provision of civic centres, pipe borne water and empowering local vigilantes with basic security equipment to guard the communities. The findings agree with Abugu (2014) ^[1] who agreed that local government attains some of the stated objectives (provision of infrastructure or social welfare packages) through provision of enabling environment such as security and

equality in the distribution of common wealth to the citizens and at the same time, respond favourably and effectively to their other needs. Similarly, the study of Lawal (2014) ^[11] agrees to the findings of this study that larger percentage of local government in Nigeria lack basic rural infrastructure such as pipe borne water, road networks, among others needed to engender desired development. The findings in research question three revealed that Orlu local government contributed to low extent to health care facilities and services for community development. The ratings of the respondents revealed that the local government only contributed to high extent in making provision for immunization of polio eradication and sensitization on proper refuse disposal. On the other hand, the respondents rated that Orlu local government area contributed to low extent in making provision for drugs for fighting malaria, giving free anti-natal drugs to pregnant women, renovation of public health centres, provision of basic medical equipment for nurses, recruitment of qualified personnel, among others. The findings agree with the view of Nsibambi (2008) ^[12] that, in health, provision of medical care and services has fallen far short of local needs through lack of finances and insufficient manpower. The findings also corroborate with the findings of Adeyemo (2005) who noted that the major contradictions of primary health care centres implementation using local government as an example include shortage of qualified personnel and finance, inadequate transportation, lack of maintenance culture and high degree of leadership turn-over. The findings are not in agreement with Imhabekhai (2009) who stated that the provision of health services is one of the main functions of local government areas nationwide. He further opined that it is a constitutional responsibility that they cannot abandon. Thus, local government areas in Nigeria are directly involved in environmental sanitation, especially in public places like markets, public highways, drains, Public square, parks and gardens as well as mobilizing people to clean their environment. Each state government has set aside one day in a month for environmental sanitation by the general public and its enforcement is the responsibility of the local government areas in each state. Finally, the findings in research question four revealed that Orlu local government contributed to high extent in education for community development. This is because the respondents' ratings showed that the local government contributed to high extent in recruitment of teachers, provisions of teaching materials, and supervision of schools. The findings corroborate with the findings of Tekele and Roba (2017) ^[18] who encapsulated that the level of community participation in cultural ceremonies, economic development, agricultural incentives and produce and capacity building was found to be high as compared to other components under study.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that local government is the nearest government to the people and thus, a channel through which the community feels the pulse of other higher levels of government. To this effect, the study contends that local government is the hub for social, agricultural, economic, technology, educational, cultural, health and environment development for effective participation in the community development. In Orlu local government area, it is only education sector that is highly implemented while other areas such as agriculture, health and infrastructure are to low extent given attention while the people suffer and migrate to cities where they will enjoy the amenities. It is, therefore, concluded that the local government should revisit the objectives of which local government is created and streamline their operation towards implementing them.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. The local government should adopt bottom up approach (participatory approach) in planning, implementing, monitoring, controlling and evaluating the developmental programmes in rural communities. This will enable people to participation in all the stages of developmental projects in the communities.
2. The town unions should demonstrate good governance by showing high degree of transparency, accountability and participation of people in developmental projects.
3. The local government should bring in technology for faster development of the communities. Technology in the areas of housing, construction, infrastructure, agriculture and allied industries to accelerate the rate of rural transformation in the area.
4. Local government projects committee members should exert greater degree of cooperation with the local government administrator to see that projects started are finished in due time.
5. Community stakeholders should be in cordial relationship with local government management and as mediators between the local government and the community.

References

1. Abugu SO. The role and challenges of local government in community development: An insight. *Review of Public Administration and Management*. 2014; 3(6):129-139.
2. Abutudu M. The challenges and opportunities for improving the local government system in Nigeria. Paper presented at the third biennial national conference on community development in Nigeria held at Grand Hotel, Asaba, November, 2011, 20-24.
3. Adeyemi DO. Local government and health care delivery in Nigeria: A case study. *Journal of Hum. Ecol.* 2005; 18(2):149-160.
4. Agbakoba S. Local Government Administration in Nigeria: A practical approach. In Ojai, K. (Ed). *Theory and practice of local government*. UNAD Publishers, Ado Ekiti, 2014.
5. Akukwe FN. *Community development cooperative and democracy: A guideline to social workers*. Onitsha: Veritas Printing and Publishing co, Ltd, Onitsha, 2012.
6. Esan, O. The contributions of agriculture to economic development in Soba Local Government Area of Kaduna State. An Unpublished Thesis submitted to the Department of Local Government and Development Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2016.
7. Federal Republic of Nigeria. The constitution of federal republic of Nigeria. Daily Times, Lagos, 2013.
8. Hornby, AS. *Oxford advanced learners dictionary: International students learners edition*. (8th edition), 2006.
9. Hornby AS. *Oxford advanced learners' dictionary of current English*. Oxford University Press, UK, 2006, 1435.
10. Imha bekhai CI. *Management of community development: programmes and projects*. Benin Uniben Press, Benin City, 2009.
11. Lawal T. Local government and rural infrastructural delivery in Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. 2014; 4(4):139-147.
12. Nsibambi AR. *World Health Report*. Assessed from <https://www.who.int> 2008 PDF, 2008.
13. Oduro-Ofori E. The role of local government in local economic development of the district level in Ghana: A study of the Ejisu-Juaben Municipal Assembly. A published PhD rerum politicarum awarded by the Faculty of Spatial Planning, Technical University of Dortmund, Germany, 2011. DOI: 10.17877/DE29OR-14100.
14. Oladejo JA, Olawuyi SO, Anjorin TD. Analysis of women participation in agricultural production in Egbedore Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development*. 2011; 4(1):1-11.
15. Olley O. The role of local government in rural development: A study of Warri North Local Government Area of Delta State. An Unpublished Thesis submitted to the Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2011.
16. Olowu D. Local institutional and political structures and processes: Recent experience in Africa. *Public Administration and Development*. 2013; 23(1):41-52.
17. Sanders IT. Theories of community development. *Journal of Rural Sociology*. 2010; 23(1):1-12.
18. Tekele T, Roba H. Role of local government for development: A study in Aleta Wondo Town Administration, Sidama Zone, SNNPR State, Ethiopia. *Journal of Humanity and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. 2017; 22(9):2279-0837. www.iosrjournals.org