

NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (NDDC) COMMUNITY-BASED POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME AND RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN CROSS RIVER STATE

ADAKA, SUNDAY SIMEON Ph.D

Department of Sociology Faculty of
Social Sciences Federal University
Lafia Nasarawa State, Nigeria

&

OBOQUA, EKPENYONG DAVID Ph.D

Department of Adult and Continuing Education
Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu
E-mail: ekpenyongoboqua@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study investigated the Niger Delta Development commission community-based poverty alleviation programmes and rural community development in Cross River State, Nigeria. One null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study, while stratified and single sampling techniques were used in selecting 1300 respondents. A 24-item questionnaire titled: Community-Based Poverty Alleviation Programme and Rural Community Development Questionnaire (CPAPRCDQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated and the reliability estimate using test retest reliability method ranging from .078 to .086. The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient to analyze the data of the study. The result showed that there was a significant relationship between NDDC community-based poverty alleviation programme and rural community development. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made among others that rural dwellers should be encouraged to participate in community development programmes.

Keywords: Niger Delta development commission, community-based poverty alleviation, programmes, rural development.

Introduction

Community-based poverty alleviation and its more recent variant, community driven poverty alleviation programmes are among the fastest growing mechanisms for channeling development assistance (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). In Nigeria, the institutionalization of modern rural development as the backbone for combating poverty and promoting socio-economic growth can be traced to when community development was adopted as a special development model. Okaba (2005) states that community development was conceived as a way of promoting better living for the whole community with the active participation and if possible on the initiative of the community. It included a whole range of development activities in the community whether these were undertaken by government or unofficial bodies. It was a people's initiatives to find solutions to their individual and common problems with reliance on their own resources as much as possible and assistance from outside the community. Ebong (1991) states that since community development was seen as a model, the need to consciously accelerate the pace of rural development became increasingly quite compelling ; if only to stem the high

incidence of selective rural-urban migration and act as a platform to tackle rural poverty and improve the standard of living. Thus in the Third Development Plan (1980-85), the Nigerian government was worried over the widening gap in wealth creation, employment and overall standard of living between the rural and urban areas, and on egalitarian grounds sought to achieve a balanced development between the two (FRN, 1975:30). Its development policy therefore focused on efforts to increase rural economy and generally enhance the quality of life in rural areas.

Ajagi (1999) observed that poverty is higher in rural areas than urban areas. The number of the rural poor is roughly twice that of the urban poor. The depth of poverty was more than double in rural areas. The average per capita expenditure of a poor rural household was one – fifth in 1992 and income inequality is also worse in rural areas. Two of the early – poverty alleviation programmes were the 1972 National Accelerated Food Production Programmes (NAFPP) and the Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB) that were entirely devoted to funding agriculture. The NAFPP turned out to be a colossal waste (Okaba, 2005). Other schemes included the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution Programme, Go Back to Land Programme, Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI); Better Life for Rural Women, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Nigeria Agricultural and Development Authority (NALDA), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Family Support Programme (FSP), Petroleum (Special) Trust Fund (PTF), the Peoples' Bank, the Community Banks, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) etc. These Programmes and Projects were designed as means of lifting the poor, particularly the rural poor out of poverty and contributing to national growth and development. They were concerned with attempts to identify existing constraints on rural development and recommendations to alleviate poverty. DFRRI, for instance, was established to assist in the opening up of rural areas through the provision of basic amenities such as roads, water and electricity to stimulate rural economic activities and to reduce rural poverty (Okaba, 2005). In order to improve access to credit or capital, the government in 1989 established the Peoples Bank, which was to provide loans to prospective entrepreneurs on soft terms and without stringent requirement of collaterals. It also regulated to an extent the activities of Community Banks that also sprouted as adjuncts of the Peoples Bank and as source of cheap funds for rural communities. The Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) had the specific focus of increasing food production on the premise that availability of food will mean higher nutritional intake. The Petroleum (special) Trust Fund (PTF) was also established to use the gains from petroleum products to complete abandoned projects, rehabilitate decaying social and economic infrastructure in rural and urban areas and help enhance the socio - economic wellbeing of the people (Ebong,1991),

In order to ease the transportation problem, in rural - urban centres, the urban mass transit programme was formally launched in March 1989 to facilitate the provision of effective and efficient rural urban mass transit services for the benefit of the entire citizenry (Obadan 1997). NDE was designed and implemented to combat rural and urban unemployment and articulate policies aimed at developing work programmes with labour intensive potentials, the overall goal was increased socio – economic well being of the rural people. The Better Life for Rural Women and the Family Support Programme (FSP) also tried to introduce a gender element into the community anti – poverty programmes acting on the assumption that rural women needed special treatment in the light of their

immense contributions to the national economy, both as small scale entrepreneurs and home keepers (Okaba, 2005).

The poverty alleviation efforts suffered the same fate as they failed to transform the rural character of poverty. Thus the history of poverty alleviation efforts in Nigeria has obviously been that of experimenting with one concept after the other. The recent government assessment of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) indicates that it lacks the capacity to ostensibly check – mate rural poverty. Clearly, Nigeria has never lacked rural poverty alleviation ideas, except the ability to buttress such ideas with systematic objective data and translate them into realistic, practical plans and systematic implementation. Nigeria does not also lack the requisite resources to combat poverty at the rural community level, except the paucity of definite institutional or organizational framework to effectively organize and harness the abundant human and material resources within the rural community to improve the general social and economic conditions of the rural people (Ebong, 1991).

In this study therefore, the researcher is motivated to look into the recent Cross River State community development initiative on the issue of rural poverty as led by NDDC in their community-based poverty alleviation programmes. This research is carried out to examine how NDDC community-based poverty alleviation programmes meet to any extent the people's community needs. The specific areas of community needs considered include: youth empowerment, rural infrastructure development, social welfare services, rural agriculture development and rural economic development.

Rural poverty alleviation stands as one of the major development challenges of the millennium. This issue has over the years made community development experts, international agencies such as European Union (EU), Department for International Development (DFID), Ford Foundation and the UN group as well as World Bank and concerned Nigerian development and rural sociologists very concerned and as such very active in poverty reduction activities.

Poverty alleviation has resulted in both domestic and international initiatives to introduce programmes to significantly reduce the miseries of the poor. Poverty is higher in rural areas and eradicating extreme poverty by the year 2010 as expected by the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving the proportion of the people living in poverty appears less feasible. Out of the 140 million Nigerians about 1/3 of that population goes home hungry every day without food Coady (2001). Unsuccessful efforts at rural poverty reduction by stake holders in community development is fraught with dangers and constitutes a drag on the rural economy. An inherent danger of a poorly operated community poverty reduction programme is the failure to mobilize rural communities into a cohesive unit that can be empowered to carry out self help projects by themselves. Another main danger, this time for the nation is the implied failure of government by this singular act to practicalise the United Nations concept of community development in all facets which emphasizes that the efforts of the people and that of government must unite towards community economic development. Again, any form of unsuccessful poverty alleviation initiatives may deny the rural communities opportunity for capacity enhancement for people who have basic skills but need additional resources to avoid poverty and ensure wealth creation, for through such capacity enhancement scheme, beneficiaries are provided with sustainable livelihood programmes such as access to information on new technologies needed for their trade, occupation or business. The failure of rural poverty efforts also means that poor communities may economically not benefit from micro-credit schemes which provide financial assistance to small scale businesses to facilitate agricultural and business development.

The lack of appropriate poverty alleviation mechanisms in rural areas, has denied communities access to the benefit of social welfare services such as quality informal education and literacy, sustainable quality health-care delivery services; community enlightenment and sensitization scheme which could have provided a collection of programmes leading to active community participation in poverty reduction and wealth creation activities.

The general observation is that poverty alleviation programmes have not conformed with the widespread and acceptable principle in community participation in development. There has been no shift in the conceptualization of poverty alleviation initiatives from economics to a more people-centered ideology. Even the Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) which is a home grown poverty reduction strategy has little promise to reduce poverty in rural communities in Nigeria. The grassroots government that is credited as having the greatest influence on the rural community is confused as to the solution. There is therefore the need for scholars and researchers in development studies to come to terms with the issue of community based poverty alleviation programmes and make concrete effort to help the rural community experience improvement in the standard of living and quality of life through a bottom-top approach to poverty alleviation. Thus the purpose of this study is NDDC community-based poverty alleviation programmes and rural community development in Cross River State

Statement of hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between NDDC community-based poverty alleviation programmes and rural community development in Cross River State.

Methodology

The ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 1300 respondents was randomly drawn from 18 communities in the study area. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire titled: Community-Based Poverty Alleviation Programmes and Rural Community Development Questionnaire (CPAPRCDQ) designed by the researchers. The instrument had two sections A and B. Section A had respondents demographic information while section B had 24-item questionnaire in the form of modified six-point rating scale of Very Strongly Agree (VSA) – 6, Strongly Agree (SA) – 5, Agree (A) – 4, Disagree (D) – 3 Strongly Disagree (SD) – 2 and Very Strongly Disagree (VSD) – 1 and scoring for negatively worded items were reversed from 1- 6. The instrument was duly validated and its reliability estimate established at 0.078 to 0.086 using test retest reliability method. The reliability coefficient was considered high enough to justify the use of instrument for the study. The copies of the instrument were administered personally by the researchers with nine research assistants trained for the purpose. At the end of the exercise, all the copies of the questionnaire were collected back by the researchers and the research assistant. For ease of data preparation, codes were designed for each item and a coding schedule was prepared by developing a key for each of the constructs of the instrument. The data collected was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The hypothesis for this research states that, there is a significant relationship between NDDC community based poverty alleviation programmes and rural community

development in Cross River State. The dependent variable in this hypothesis is rural community development while NDDC community based poverty alleviation programmes is the independent variable. The statistical tool used to test this hypothesis is Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The result is as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between NDDC community based poverty alleviation programmes and rural community development in Cross River State N=1300

Variables	ΣX ΣY	ΣX^2 ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-cal
NDDC community based poverty alleviation	23346	424888	509874	0.48
Rural community development	28291	618203		

* $P < 0.05$, d.f=1298, critical $r=0.196$

The result in Table 1 reveals that the calculated r-value of 0.48 was found to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.196 needed for significance at 0.05 level of significance with 1298 degrees of freedom. This implies that there exists a significant relationship between NDDC community based poverty alleviation programmes and community development. The positive r-value indicates that increase in NDDC community based poverty alleviation programmes will lead to increase in community development in Cross River State. Consequently a decrease in NDDC community based poverty alleviation programmes will reduce community development in Cross River State.

Discussion of findings

There is a significant relationship between NDDC community based poverty alleviation programmes and rural community development in Cross River State. The finding of this hypothesis revealed that there exist a significant relationship between NDDC community based poverty alleviation programmes and rural community development in Cross River State. This finding is in line with the finding obtained by Coady (2001) who found that there exist a significant relationship between poverty alleviation community based programmes and community development. According to him Progesa, an anti-poverty programme in Mexico that selected poor households on the basis of census data without any community involvement was more effective at targeting poor communities than at targeting poor households within them.

This finding is also in agreement with the finding of Mansuri (2004) who observed in his study that there exist a significant relationship between community based poverty alleviation programmes and community development. He observed that in a typical social fund, community infrastructure is built with local participation in the selection and management of facilities. In most cases, community representatives send project proposals to a central public agency, which allocates funds on the basis of such criteria as extent of community involvement, community capacity for collective actions, and other factors affecting the feasibility of the proposed project.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between NDDC community-based poverty alleviation programmes and rural community development in the study area.

Recommendations

1. Villagers should be encouraged to participate in community development projects.
2. NDDC should ensure that the target group should be the beneficiary of the skills acquisition programmes

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