

Comparative Analysis of Poverty Status of Community Participation in Rural Development Projects of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The study was designed to comparatively analyze the poverty status of community participation in selected rural development projects of Ini and Abak Local Government Areas (LGA's) of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It was as a result of the observation that systematic research aimed at understanding factors influencing poverty status through community participation in the two L.G.A's seemed to be lacking despite the presence of many development projects in these communities. The selected development projects included-electricity, pipe borne water, school blocks, and road rehabilitation. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. Ini and Abak LGA's were purposively selected on the basis of their proximity to the state capital, Uyo. A total of 200 community members were randomly sampled from ten households in five villages, in two wards, within two autonomous communities of the study areas. However, only 161 respondents who completed all the questionnaire items were actually used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics and the Maximum Likelihood Probit Regression Analysis were used in the analyses. Results revealed that more males (78.6%) than females participated in Ini LGA, while in Abak, more females (57.14%) participated in the development projects. In comparison, the maximum probit analysis revealed that communities in Ini L.G.A, participated more in self-help project than Abak Communities. Perhaps, this could be explained by the proximity of Ini to the state capital. The L.G.A was almost neglected in development projects resulting from its location which is about 66km from the state capital. The communities in Ini L.G.A, struggled on their own to provide the needed infrastructure for development purposes. On the other hand, Abak L.G.A is closely located to the state capital, and the communities thereof expected the state government to provide most of the needed infrastructures. There were low level of education in the study areas. Other obstacles to participation included: lack of economic power, high cost of living, inadequate monitoring of projects, and embezzlement of funds. Based on the above findings, the following were recommended: formal and informal education should be emphasized to create awareness of development projects. Governments should improve road networks to enable farmers sell their farm produce to other communities and beyond, profitable time management strategy is equally necessary for those employed in formal occupation in order to participate in the development of their communities. Wealthy individuals and groups in these communities should assist in the rehabilitation of projects in their communities. [New York Science Journal. 2009;2(6):68-75]. (ISSN: 1554-0200).

Keywords: Community participation, Rural development, Projects, Comparative analysis

Introduction

According to Imoh (2002) study on Family size and participation of women in the Socio-economic Development of Mbaise, observed that forty-two years after Nigeria's independence, most rural areas in Nigeria demonstrate characteristics that indicate lack of prosperity. This situation has not changed much even today. Participatory rural development seeks to improve the social, economic, political, and capacities of the rural people. Unless rural people are given the opportunity and means to fully participate in development projects, they will continue to be excluded from its benefits. However, many governments, non-governmental organizations, and development agencies have recognized that the top-down approach which is characteristic of the traditional development strategies has largely failed to reach and actually benefit the rural poor.

It is on record that inspite of various efforts at developing rural areas, poverty, ignorance and disease are still very prevalent in Nigerias rural areas. Chigbo (2001) opined that most of the rural development projects failed because of faulty goal specification, fraud, and inadequate funding. In the same vein, most of these projects were either borrowed or merely forced on the people, without due consideration of the political and cultural norms, which of course resulted in failure (Adagba, 2002).

To overcome this ugly situation, a new approach has evolved. This is called “popular participation” whereby local people take initiatives or influence their own development. It implies the active involvement of the rural people, particularly the dis-advantaged groups that form the mass of the rural population. The philosophy guiding this approach is that the resources of the community are mobilized by the community for the good of the community. It should be anchored on the cooperative efforts of the people with or without any external stimuli (FAO 1996; Ikeji 2003). Such participation is essential at all stages of the project – from conception, through planning, implementing, to monitoring and evaluation.

Problem Statement

It has been observed that inspite of abundant natural, physical and human resources that Nigeria is endowed with, there is still high incidence rate of poverty in Nigeria especially in the rural areas. In Akwa Ibom State, majority of the people live in the rural areas and they depend mainly on agriculture. They operate fragmented and maginal holdings while some others concentrate on artisanal fishing. Despite the obvious role of farming and artisanal fishing in the economy of the state, rural people tend to remain poor. In general they share several characteristics such as low levels of educational attainment, a relatively large number of children, relatively low access to material resources, physical and social infrastructures, higher susceptibility to community-wide exogenous shocks such as weather induced crop losses and natural disasters. However, it must be noted that rural communities also vary greatly with regard to the condition of their rural economies and rural development needs.

Communities in Ini and Abak Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria have been involved in community development projects over the years, but their participation output seemed not to have yielded any dividends of prosperity. It was further observed that systematic research aimed at understanding factors influencing poverty status of the above named communities through participation in community development projects seemed to be lacking. These communities need improvement in the quality of their living standards. This, therefore, was of great concern, hence the decision to investigate the status of the communities in these two L.G.A's through their participation in community development projects. At this juncture, it became pertinent to ask a series of questions to which this work intended to address. What were the on-going community development projects in Ini and Abak LGA's ? To what extent did the people of Ini and Abak participate in the development of their communities through development projects? What factors influenced peoples participation in community development projects? How did their participation affect their living standards? What were the major obstacles to effective participation in development projects in the study area?

Objective of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to comparatively analyze community participation in development projects of Ini and Abak LGA's . In order to achieve this objective, the following specific objectives were to:

1. identify the socio-economic characteristics of respondents in the study areas;
2. select relevant community development projects in the two study areas;
3. determine factors that influence participation of people in community development projects in the two areas;
4. compare community participation between the people of Ini and Abak LGA's;
5. determine obstacles militating against community participation in development projects.

Today, it is widely accepted that man (homo sapiens) is the central link and principal agent for development process (Imoh, 2002). If the above statement is correct, and if development has to do with improvement of the quality of life of the people, then community participation is very crucial to development. This study is therefore justified as it offers a scientific insight into the influence of development projects on living standards through participation.

Methodology

The study area comprised of Ini and Abak L.G.A's of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Geographically, the state is one of the core Niger Delta States and is located in the south-south geopolitical zone. The state lies between latitudes 4°31" and 5°31" North, and Longitudes 7°25" and 8°25" East of the Equator. It has a

total land mass estimated at 7,245,935km². The state has common borders with Cross Rivers State to the East, Abia State to the North, Rivers state to the West, and Atlantic Ocean by the South (AKADEP, 2006). It is made up of 31 LGA's with Uyo as the state capital.

Akwa Ibom State had a population figure of 3,920,208 with 2,044,510 males and 1,875,698 females; and a population density of 587 people per km² (FRN, Gazette 2007). The climate of the state falls within the tropical rain forest zone. The annual rainfall is estimated at 2000mm in the hinterland and 2400 mm along the coast. The state is an agricultural state and is rich in culture with institutions like Ekpo, Eong, Akata, etc; which play positive roles in promoting social, economic, and political development of the area.

Ini LGA is located at about 66km away from the state capital, on the extreme north of the state. The 2006 population census gave a total population figure of 99,196 people of which 52,644 were males, and 46,552 were females (NPC, 2007). This L.G.A is generally regarded as the "food basket" of Akwa Ibom State. The people produce rice, cassava, plantain, maize, cocoyam, and vegetables. The area is also endowed with abundant natural resources such as petroleum, limestone, gold, copper, and lignite among others (Idachaba, 1991).

Abak L.G.A, on the other hand, is located at about 18km away from the state capital, Uyo. This L.G.A had a population figure of 139,090 people in 2006, which comprised 73,578 males and 65,512 females (NPC, 2007). The major occupation of the people is agriculture, especially in palm produce. Others include mineral resources.

The study population comprised of men and women who are aged 18 years and above in conformity with the national population policy on age irrespective of their occupation, literacy level and socio-economic status, participation was seen as a strategy for community development.

Sampling Procedure

The study adopted the multi-stage sampling technique. The two L.G.A's, Ini and Abak, were purposively selected out of 31 L.G.A's in the State, on the basis of their proximity to the state capital. While Abak is at the nucleus of the state capital, Ini is 66km away.

Then, two clans were randomly selected from each LGA, giving a total of four clans. In each clan, five villages were randomly selected, giving a total of 20 villages. Finally, ten household per village were also randomly selected which gave rise to a total number of two hundred households from the list of households in each village (sampling frame) where respondents were actually selected for the study. The sample size therefore, is 200.

Instruments/Data Collection Techniques

The major instrument used for this study was the questionnaire which sought information about the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents, and other general questions on community participation and development. The questionnaire items consisted of both open and fixed choice questions. They were administered as face-to-face interview to all respondents. This was to ensure uniformity in the interpretation of concepts, and to create room for possible clarification where necessary.

Trained enumerators were used to administer the questionnaire and to interpret in their local dialect where necessary. Data collected were those on awareness of development projects, level of participation, urban exposure and problems encountered, in addition to socio-economic characteristics.

Analytical Technique

Data generated were subjected to statistical analysis using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Objectives i, ii, and v were achieved using descriptive statistics while the Maximum Likelihood Probit analysis was employed to achieve the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Model Specification

The model is implicitly specified as follows:

$$Y = f(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, \dots, X_n, e) \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where:

- Y = Participation (participation = 1; no participation = 0)
- X₁ = Sex (male = 1; Female = 0)

- X₂ = Age (in years)
- X₃ = Marital Status (married = 1; if otherwise = 0)
- X₄ = Household size (2-6 = 1; 7 and above = 0)
- X₅ = Occupation (formal = 1; informal = 0)
- X₆ = Religion (christianity = 1; if otherwise = 0)
- X₇ = Educational level (years of schooling)
- X₈ = Years spent in the community (in years)
- X₉ = Urban exposure (exposed = 1; not exposed = 0)
- X₁₀ = Awareness (aware = 1; not aware = 0)
- e = error term.

$$\text{Explicitly, } Y = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_3 + b_4x_4 \dots + b_{10}x_{10} + e$$

Where Y = participation

b₀ = constant/intercept

b₁-b₁₀ = regression parameters to be estimated

X's = as already defined above

e = error term

Result and Discussions

Major findings of this study are discussed according to the study objectives. The socio-economic characteristics of Ini and Abak respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to socio-economic characteristics

Variables	INI		ABAK	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Sex: Male	66	78.57	33	42.86
Female	18	21.43	44	57.14
Age: 18-27	10	11.90	45	58.44
28-37	37	44.05	20	25.97
38-47	29	34.52	07	09.09
48-57	06	7.14	02	02.60
58 and above	02	2.38	03	03.90
Marital Status: Married	66	78.57	32	41.56
Single	18	21.43	42	54.55
Household Size: 2-6	57	67.86	46	59.97
7 and above	29	32.14	31	40.26
Occupation: Formal	50	59.52	40	51.94
Informal	34	40.48	37	40.05
Religion: Christian	82	97.62	76	98.70
Muslim	01	01.19	01	01.30
Others	01	01.19	-	-
Education level: Primary	04	04.76	09	09.09
Secondary	36	42.86	22	28.57
Tertiary	44	52.38	48	62.33
Urban Exposure: < 5 years	06	07.14	07	09.09
5 years and above	78	92.85	70	90.90
Awareness: Aware	77	91.67	66	85.71
Not aware	07	08.33	11	14.29
Total (n) 161	84	100	77	100

Source: Survey data, 2008

The table shows that majority of the respondents (78.57%) in Ini were males, while (57.14%) in Abak were females. More males participated in Ini, and this could be as a result of the traditional male dominance in every sphere of human endeavour which renders women as mere housewives, firewood collectors, and homemakers. Abak on the other hand, is more urban-like and the cultural pattern of male

dominance is on the decrease because of the influence of the state capital in terms of civilization and enlightenment.

The table reveals that young people aged 18-37 years were found to have participated in development projects in the study area which were represented by 55.95% in Ini and 84.4% in Abak. The lower percentage in Ini when compared to Abak could be as a result of migration of able bodied young people to urban centers in search of better opportunities according to Imoh (2002). However, young people formed the preponderance of community participation in the two LGA's. Younger people tend to be more actively involved in development projects of their communities than older people.

The educational level of respondents was fairly high especially for those of Abak L.G.A. Majority of the respondents (62.33% had education at the tertiary level (i.e, OND – first degree). This also could be as a result of the nearness of Abak to the state capital where the University and other educational institutions are located.

Development Projects in Ini and Abak L.G.A's

At the time of this survey, three different major projects were going on in Ini and Abak Local government areas. These projects include water, electricity, school block, and road rehabilitation. Table 2 shows that about 73.8% of respondents in Ini L.G.A, participated in electricity project than other projects in the area. In Abak L.G.A, most of the respondents (61.3%) also participated in electricity project than others. These projects form the felt needs of community members. This agrees with Ekong (2003), who asserts that the community's "felt needs" must be met before tackling the "real needs". Community projects therefore, can only succeed and yield the expected dividends if the felt needs of the people are met.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to On-going Projects

Projects	INI		ABAK	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Electricity	62	73.8	47	61.3
Water	40	47.6	38	49.3
School Block	36	42.8	-	-
Road Rehabilitation	-	-	27	35.0
Total (multiple response)	84		77	

Source: Survey data, 2008

Determinants of Participation in Ini and Abak L.G.A's.

Table 3, shows the result of the Maximum Likelihood Probit analysis of the determinants of participation in community development projects of Ini and Abak Local government areas. The result indicated that about 95% of the variables tested were significant at 1 and 5 per cent levels of significance.

Table 3: Determinants of Community Participation in Ini LGA

Variables	Coefficients		Standard error	t-ratio
Intercept	-1.7602	0.3849		4.5726***
Sex (X ₁)	5193	0.0776		6.6810***
Age (X ₂)	.0173		0.0039	4.4028***
Marital Status (X ₃)	-.5598		0.2039	-2.7467**
Household Size (X ₄)	-.0529		0.0143	-3.7143***
Occupation (X ₅)	3574	0.1037		3.4461***
Religion (X ₆)	3411	0.1568		2.1756**
Education (X ₇)	.0422	0.0126		3.5219***
Yrs spent in Comm. (X ₈)	-.0098	0.0038		-2.5907**
Urban Exposure (X ₉)	-4375		0.1009	4.3373***
Awareness (X ₁₀)	-.1209	0.1069		-1.1320

Source: Survey data 2008. *** significant at 1%, ** at 5%, * at 10%

According to table 3, the coefficient for age is statistically significant and positive, implying that younger people participated more in community development projects of their communities than their older counterparts. This finding agrees with Ekong (2003) that older rural people tend to take less active part in the general social and economic activities.

Household size is statistically significant at 1%, but negative implying that as household size decreases, participation in community development increases. This conforms to *a priori* expectations that community members with small household size will participate more than large households because of the heavier burden of household sustenance. This finding agrees with Imoh (2004) study on family size and participation of women in socio-economic development which revealed that large family size did not permit women to participate due to routine burden of meeting the needs of many children.

Educational level is statistically significant at 1% and positive, this conforms to *a priori* expectation that the more an individual is educated, the more likely he would accept and participate in development projects. This agrees with the findings of Udoh 1999; Asiabaka 2002; Nwaru 2004, and Imoh 2006 who noted that education and training produce labour force that is mobilized, more skilled, amenable to risk taking, and adaptable to the needs of changing economy. Nwaru and Ekumakama (2002) further noted that this kind of labour force participates effectively in development projects. The coefficients of sex, marital status and occupation were significant statistically and positive, while others like years spent in the community, urban exposure were statistically significant but negative at either 1% or 5% level as the case may be in accordance with *a priori* expectations as determinants of community participation.

On the other hand, the result of the maximum Likelihood Probit Analysis for Abak L.G.A is shown on Table 4. The coefficient of these variables, age, sex, occupation, and household size were statistically significant and positive at 1% level of significance in Abak as they were in Ini L.G.A.

Table 4: Probit Regression Analysis for Abak Local Government Area

Variables	Coefficients		Standard error	t-value
Intercept	-1.9925	0.2039	-9.7709***	
Sex (X ₁)	0.3176	0.0661	4.8031***	
Age (X ₂)	0.0186	0.0040	4.6688***	
Marital Status (X ₃)	0.1923	0.0782	2.4604**	
Household Size (X ₄)	0.0583	0.0151	3.8756***	
Occupation (X ₅)	0.3019	0.0618	4.8820***	
Religion (X ₆)	0.0026	0.0218	0.1175	
Education (X ₇)	0.0120	0.0093	1.2980	
Yrs spent in Comm. (X ₈)	-0.0146	0.0032	-4.6285	
Urban Exposure (X ₉)	-0.1846	0.0635	-2.9085	
Awareness (X ₁₀)	0.1902	0.0851	2.2352**	

Source: Field Survey data 2008. significant at 1% ***, 5%** , 10%*.

In the same vain, marital status, awareness, and education were positive and statistically significant. This could perhaps imply that Abak is advantaged resulting from its close proximity with Uyo, the state capital, over Ini in receiving awareness through modern information and communication media. Other variables like years spent in the community and urban exposure were negative and statistically significant at one and five per cent respectively.

Comparative Analysis of Ini and Abak L.G.A Community Participation

According to table 5, all the respondents in both Ini and Abak Local government areas indicated membership of community participation. In Ini, about 65% made financial contributions towards the on-going projects, while in Abak, 56% made financial contributions. Majority of respondents (70%) each in the study areas indicated attendance at community meetings. Membership of committees and office holdings had the lowest participation rate. This finding is in agreement with Imoh (2002) which revealed that lack of meaningful education and urban exposure led to poor participation especially at the higher levels – committee membership and office holdings.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents according to Components of Participation

Variable	INI		ABAK	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Membership	84	100	77	100
Attendance at Meetings	59	70.24	54	70.13
Financial Contributions	54	64.29	43	55.84
Membership of committee	20	23.81	15	19.48
Office holding	12	14.29	12	15.58

Source: Field Survey, 2008

The higher participation in Ini, was a reflection of the acceptance of such development projects in the community for improved standard of living. It also demonstrated the tendency for project success and sustainability. Recent studies have shown an important link between participation and its contribution to poverty reduction (Oakley and Clayton, 2000; World Bank, 2001).

Similarly, considering the proximity of the two areas to the state capital, it was observed that Ini being far away from the capital, participated more than Abak. This perhaps may have resulted from the feeling that it was their responsibility rather than government to develop their communities. On the other hand, Abak may have felt that with the presence of the state capital, development projects should be the responsibility of government.

Hinderances to Active Participation

Table 6 revealed that 76.19% of respondents in Ini were high cost of living (82.14%) and lack of economic power as the a major hinderance to active participation in development projects of their communities. Whereas in Abak, lack of time (72.72%) and high cost of living (75.32%) were the major problems that militated against participation in development projects in their communities. Embezzlement of funds (21%) was also noted as a problem against participation in Ini L.G.A. Respondents reported that project implementation committee members embezzled funds meant for development projects. All these factors influenced active participation in the two local government areas in their order of magnitude. These factors have led to inactive participation and the ongoing of numerous development projects in the two areas of study.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents According to Hinderances Against Active Participation in Community Development Projects

Variable	INI		ABAK	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Lack of economic power	64	76.19	43	51.19
Lack of time	15	17.8	56	72.72
High cost of living	69	82.14	58	75.32
Inadequate monitoring	53	63.09	10	12.98
Embezzlement of funds	18	21.43	04	5.19

Source: Survey Data 2008.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Past attempts at national development ended up dividing Nigeria into two distinct socio-economic dichotomies – the urban and the rural. The urban-biased approach to development gave rise to decades of rural neglect because government programmes for rural development never succeeded. The main reason for programme failure was the non-inclusion of programme or project benefiting communities in the entire programme planning and execution. This study revealed that by improving participation of community members in the development process, then development projects will succeed in rural communities and poverty will subsequently be alleviated.

Lack of economic power was found to be the biggest obstacle to participation. The study recommends that opportunities should be created for rural people to be involved in profitable economic

activities that would enhance their livelihood. To achieve the above therefore, rural people should be encouraged through soft loans and training on the use of such loans to enhance their economic endeavours. Rural youths should be mobilized through economic empowerment programmes in order to position them for participation in development projects. This could be done by government through creation of employment opportunities such as regular supply of electricity in the rural areas. Quality education, both formal and informal, should be emphasized most especially in rural communities to create better awareness and profitable time management strategy.

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