

Effect of Access to Infrastructural Facilities on Sustainable Rural Development in Ihitte-Uboma Area of Imo State Nigeria

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Abstract: The main objective of this study was to determine the effects of access to infrastructural facilities on sustainable rural development in Ihitte-Uboma LGA, of Imo State. The study centered on the identification of infrastructural facilities provided, determining the access to infrastructure for their sustainable development finding the impact of infrastructures and the factors affecting the provision of infrastructure on the study area. Multi-stage random sampling was used in selecting twenty villages from randomly selected ten autonomous communities in the study area. Data were gathered from ninety respondents through personal interview and the use of structured questionnaire. It revealed that the infrastructural facilities provided were mostly initiated by community members. These infrastructures were mainly carried out through self-help effort and involvement of community organizations such as, age grade, women association, and village improvement union. The contributions of Government in establishing infrastructure in this area was discovered to be minimal and most Government initiated infrastructure failed or were abandoned. The study equally revealed that access to infrastructure by respondents was high. For example, they have access to pipe-borne water, electricity and have no access to information communication technology, improved health care service. It also revealed that infrastructure has a great impact in rural development and the factors which affect the provision of infrastructure according to the respondents were lack of fund, high cost of materials and effect of government policy. It was recommended that the Government should compliment self-help efforts by providing counterpart funding to support infrastructure facilities initiated by community members.

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1. Introduction

Rural development is a process whereby rural people are tremendously developed in such a way that they are able to appreciate their potentials and resources and be able to utilize these potentials and resource to improve their standard of living (Ukpongson and Njoku 2002). Rural development is not only needed to produce more food for the domestic consumption but also to provide exports to earn foreign exchange for the purchase of resources which must be imported for industrial development (Songco, 2002). Infrastructure is the basic structure and facilities necessary for rural people to function efficiently or an element in the package of basic needs, which a community would like to procure for better living for example good roads, good water supply, rural electrification, storage and processing facilities, health and educational facilities, communities centres, fire and security service, credit and financial institutions, agricultural research facilities, etc (Begeron, 2000). Rural communities have poor access to a range of services particularly those in more sparsely populated and remote part of the region. Many key services are declining at a rate above

the national average within the region. The level of decline varies across the region, with metropolitan authorities enjoying higher levels of public transport services for example rural people in Ihitte/Uboma L.G.A especially Awuchirimo area. However, the overall picture is certainly one of the continued and steady decline. The decline of local services in rural areas means that people have to travel more often to urban areas for access to school, shops, health facilities, business and financial facilities, storage and processing facilities services. This declined when coupled with high travel costs and limited availability of public transport to urban centers for further isolates many rural communities. Lack of mobility puts sections of the rural population particularly women, the elderly and young people at a serious disadvantage in terms of searching for employment and access to services. In many cases, the public transport that is available is not integrated (Ukpongson and Njoku 2002).

Poor infrastructure and inadequate communication impact upon the competitiveness of rural businesses care is needed to ensure that any funding for improvements in infrastructure aimed at assisting rural communities is integrated

with economic and environment objective and does not have a negative impact on the rural environment rather than positive e.g. reduced cost of Production. Governments around the world-rich and poor alike-confront the problem of how to ensure their people have access to efficient, reliable, safe and affordable infrastructure services. This challenge is particularly acute in developing countries, with many low-income households and communities and where density, distance and resource availability often conspire to increase costs. Governments and stakeholders have addressed the problem in different ways, providing a rich body of experience with policy responses to this problem. Technology and economic thinking continue to evolve, opening up new policy options and opportunities for addressing the challenge of improving access (Fan *et al.*, 2002).

The quality and coverage of infrastructure services such as electricity, water, sanitation, telecommunications and transport have a major impact on living standards and economic growth. Yet it is estimated that two billion of the world's poor lack access to adequate sanitation, two billion lack access to electricity, one billion lack access to clean water, and more than half of the world's population have never used a telephone. In some cases, this lack of access is due to a failure to make such services available in the regions or neighborhoods where the poor live. In other cases, services may be present, but beyond the affordability of poor households. An understanding of why the poor lack access is therefore critical to determining the appropriate policy response (Brook and Smith, 2001).

In practice, much uncertainty lies beyond the broad estimates of access. Policymakers and their advisers have relatively little consistent, reliable data on current consumption of infrastructure services by the poor, of the service options available to them, or their demand for improved services. Of course, this does not imply that, at the household or community level, the poor are necessarily ill-informed about the benefits of improved infrastructure services, or uncertain of their preferences across services or willingness to pay for improvements. But it does mean that those shaping policies at the national (or international) level seldom do so on the basis of rich information about the needs and preferences of the poor they seek to serve (Hamilton and Maclaughlin, 1992; Ali and Pernia, 2003).

Access to infrastructure services is more limited in Africa than in any other region of the developing world. Official estimates suggest that electricity is available to little more than 20 percent of Africa's population, versus 33 percent

in South Asia, the next-lowest region. Access to an improved water source is 56 percent (versus 78 percent in East Asia), while access to a piped water connection is just 12 percent. Access to improved sanitation, at 37 percent, is comparable to that in South Asia, but well behind the 50 percent reported for East Asia. Moreover, access to a flush toilet (connecting to a sewer or septic tank) is only 6 percent (Banerjee *et al.*, 2008).

Telecommunications is the exception to the general pattern of stasis or decline. In telephone density (landlines and cellular telephones), Africa is somewhat ahead of South Asia, with 64 versus 56 subscribers per thousand people. Landline coverage increased dramatically to reach more than 7 percent of households in the early 2000s, while cellular telephones came from nowhere to reach 10 percent of households today. Except in South Africa, almost all cellular telephones in Africa are first telephones, as opposed to second telephones for households that already have landlines (Banerjee *et al.*, 2008).

Coverage rates in urban areas are an order of magnitude higher than those in rural areas. In fact, Africa's low overall access rates are partly explained by negligible service coverage in rural areas, where the bulk of the population still resides. When broader measures of improved water and sanitation are considered, the discrepancies are still large and stark. Thus, about 63 percent of the urban population has access to an improved water source, compared with about 14 percent of the rural population. Moreover, about 42 percent of the urban population has access to improved sanitation versus about 7 percent of the rural population.

Despite the importance attached to the rural areas, they are not attractive to live in. Therefore access to infrastructural facilities which improve the quality of life usually, is absence of portable water, electricity, good feeder roads, information and communication technology, affordable housing, universal basic education, improved health care service, community hall, market, culvert, etc (Kwo, 2000).

Attempts at solving the rural problems have been the concern of the governments over the years. For example Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), the Directorate for Food, Roads and Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), and Local Empowerment and Environment Management Project (LEEMP) are programmes of government aimed at developing the rural areas. The contention of this is that rural infrastructure, if adequately provided can enhance the quality of rural life. Yet, it assumed that rural people have benefited very little from most rural development programmes.

Africa lags well behind other developing regions in access to infrastructure services. Limited gains made in the 1990s continued in the early 2000s, and there is now clear evidence that many countries are failing to expand services fast enough to keep up with rapid demographic growth and even faster urbanization. If present trends prevail, Africa is likely to fall even further behind other developing regions, delaying universal access for a half century or more in many countries (Balisacan and Pernia, 2002).

2. Methodology

This research was carried out in Ihitte/Uboma Area of Imo States. It is located 26km north east of Umuahia and bounded on the north east by the Imo river in Imo State. Isinweke is the headquarter of Ihitte/Uboma- which is located about 5km from Umuahia/Owerri road junction popularly called 71/2 mile junction and about 6km from Oriagu market in Mbanjo L.G.A. It has a land of undulating topography and comprises of 20 communities, each under Ezechijo supported by progressive (town) unions and youth. They are Abueke, Amakoha, Amainyi, Amoyinta, Awuchinuwo, Ezemba, Kperejere, Nkumeato, Okata, Onicho-Uboma, Umiderim, Umuezegwu, Umihi, Umuomi, Uzinomi, Ekwereocha, Eluema Abueke, Ihinna, Umunomu. The total population is 2011 in 119,419. The people are largely peasants with some widely traveled elites doing business in the cosmopolitan cities of Aba, Umuahia and neighbouring States. Its vegetation is characterized as forest vegetation, because it falls within the lowland rain forest zone and in the moist forest at low medium altitude zone. The temperature maximum ranges from 65.9°F in January (Harmattan) through 73.4°F in April with fluctuations to about 70.7°F in December. This area experiences two main seasons in the yearly; the dry season and the rainy season. The dry season lasts for between

three and four months of the year within the months of November, December, January and February during which period monthly rainfall is about 140cm. The rainy season experience a monthly average up to and over 350cm. The study area was typical of Ihitte/Uboma L.G.A rural setting with majority of the population benefiting from infrastructural facilities. Other economic ventures were secondary and were mostly on a part time basis. The basis for the selection of this area for the study was the existence of presence of rural development programme activities in the area, availability of infrastructural facilities in the area(NPC2006).

Multi-stage sampling technique was used to draw sample for the study. At the first stage, 10 (ten) communities were randomly selected from the 20 communities that made up the Local Government Area. The selected communities were Abureke, Ezimba, I Okata, Nkumato, Uzionmi, Onicho Uboma, Ekwereocha Umuihi, Amainyi and Umuderi. From each of these selected communities two village were randomly selected to get a total of 20. Also from each of the selected 20 villages, 6 development planner were randomly selected to give a total of 120 development planner.

For the purpose of this study, two methods of data collection were used. The first was personal interview during which the researcher on face-to-face basis interviewed some of the respondents and the information gathered by the researcher was recorded.

The second method was by the use of structured questionnaire which was handed over to the 120 respondents. After filling the questionnaires, 90 copies were returned to the researcher for analysis.

The researcher analyzed the data collected using descriptive statistics which includes frequency table and percentages. In addition, 3 point liker scale rating was used also.

Table 1: Identification of Infrastructural Facilities

Facility	Community initiated		Government initiated		NGO initiated	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<i>Electricity</i>	34	37.6	34	37.7	10	16.4
<i>Water supply</i>	10	16.9	25	32.5	34	37.7
<i>Community hall</i>	5	8.5	2	2.6	0	0
<i>Road network</i>	3	5.1	5	6.5	0	0
<i>Culvert</i>	2	3.4	3	3.9	0	0
<i>Health centre</i>	4	6.8	4	5.2	4	6.9
<i>School and colleges</i>	2	3.4	1	1.3	6	9.87
<i>Market</i>	2	3.4	3	3.9	7	11.5

Source: Field Survey Data, 2007

N=90(*) multiple responses

3. Discussion

From the table above, the respondents (57.6%) indicate that rural electrification project exist all the villages. Also (16.9%) of the respondents indicate that water supply project in most villages were initiated by community members while (8.5%) supported rural community hail scheme as community initiated project. On the other hand, road network received (5.1%) response as community initiated while (3.4%) for culvert as community initiated while (37.7%) respondents indicated that government is the initiator of electricity and (32.5%)

respondents indicated that government is the initiator of water supply and in the other hand (37.7%) supported rural water scheme as Non-government organization initiated project while (16.4%) respondents, indicated that rural electricity in most village were initiated by nongovernmental organization.

This implies that government has not given the required attention to the identification of infrastructural facilities provider in the area were mostly carried out by community organization like age grade, village improvement union, women organization, etc.

Access to infrastructural facilities

Table 2: Access to infrastructural facilities as perceived by rural people or respondents

AMENITIES	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE
Pipe Borne Water	64(71.1%)	9(10%)	17(18.9%)
Electricity	76(84.4%)	5(8.8%)	6(6.7%)
Information and Communication Technology	35(38.9%)	18(20%)	37(41.1%)
Universal Basic Education	52(57.8%)	11(12.2%)	27(30%)
Improved Health Care service	45(50%)	18(20%)	27(30%)
Good road and culvert	34(37.8%)	9(10%)	47(52.2%)
Total	358*	73*	161*

Source: Field Survey Data, 2007

(*)=Multiple Responses

Table 2:revealed the state of access to infrastructural facilities. About (71.1 percent) of the respondents agreed that they have access to pipe borne water and (18.9 percent) respondents disagreed that they have access to pipe borne water. About (84.4 percent) of the respondents agreed that they have access to electricity while 6.7 percent of the respondents disagreed that they have no access to electricity.

Again, (38.9percent) agree have access to information and community technology and (41.1%) respondents disagree that have no access to information and communication technology, (57.8%) of the respondents agree that have access to universal basic education and (30%) of the respondents disagree that have no access to universal basic education.

On the other hand, (50%) of the respondents agree that have access to improved health care service and (30%) of the respondents disagree that have no access to improved health care service while (37.3%) agree that have access to good road and culvert and (52.2%) disagree that have no access to good road and culvert, It implies that the rural people have access to pipe born water, electricity and universal basic education and have no access to information and communication technology, universal basic education, improved health care service and good road network and culvert.

Table 3: revealed the impact of infrastructural facilities on rural development as perceived by rural people. From the table (82.2%) respondents agree that rural backwardness is as a result of total absence of basic necessities of life such as electricity, roads, water, health care delivery have great impact on rural development while (12.2%) disagree that it has bo impact on rural development. (411%) of the respondents indicate that the provision of infrastructure facilities in your community cannot bring about rural development, or have no impact in rural development, while (56.7%) indicates that the provision of infrastructural facilities in this community can bring about rural development or create impact in rural development and (88.9%) indicate the development has many things to do with the presence of social amenities while (5.6%) indicate the development has nothing to do with the presence of social amenities. This implies that infrastructural facilities have many impacts in rural development.

Impact of Infrastructural FacilitiesTable 3: Impact of Infrastructural Facilities on Rural Development as perceived by Rural Respondents
Distribution of infrastructure strengthened the skill base of your community.

STATEMENT	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE
The provision of infrastructural facilities in your community cannot bring about rural development.	37 (41.1%)	2 (2.2%)	51 (56.7%)
Communities without electricity, pipe borne water, road, etc do far better than those with it, in terms of development.	16 (17.8%)	14 (15.6%)	68 (75.6%)
People's standard of living would not change even though there are adequate socio-physical amenities.	18 (20%)	2 (2.2%)	70 (77.8%)
Development has nothing to do with the presence of social amenities.	5 (5.6%)	5 (5.6%)	80 (88.9%)
Health care delivery and modern markets have a negative impact on people socio-economic activities.	11 (12.2%)	5 (5.6%)	74 (82.2%)
Rural backwardness is as a result of total absence of basic necessities of life such as electricity, roads, water, health care, delivery.	74 (82.2%)	5 (5.6%)	11 (12.2%)
TOTAL	161*	43*	354*

Source: Field Survey Data, 2007

Factors Affecting the Provision Of Infrastructure Facilities

Table 4: Factors affecting the Provision of Infrastructure in Study Area as perceived by Respondents

FACTORS	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE
Lack of fund	85(94.4)	2(2.2%)	3(3.3%)
High cost of material	79(87.8%)	4(4.4%)	7(7.8%)
Attitude of rural dwellers	59(65.6%)	10(11.1%)	21(23%)
Effects of government policies	51(56.7%)	9(10%)	30(33.3%)
People's lack of interest	50(55.6%)	4(4.4%)	36(40%)

Source: Field Survey Data, 2007

(*) = Multiple Responses

Table 4 reveals the followings: majority of the respondents agreed that the lack of funds affect the provision of infrastructure (94.4%) which (3.3%) disagree. (87.8%) agreed that high cost of material affect the provision of infrastructure, where (7.8%) disagreed that high cost of material affect the provision of infrastructure and (65.6%) agreed the attitude of rural dwellers affect the provision of infrastructural facilities while (23%) indicate that attitude of rural dwellers does not. affect the provision of infrastructural facilities. (56.7%) of the respondents agreed that effect of government policies affect the provision of infrastructural facilities in the study area while (33.3%) of the respondents indicated that the effect of

government does not affect the provision of infrastructural facilities in the study area. While (55.6%) of the respondents indicated that people's lack of interest affect the provision of infrastructural facilities in the study area while (40%) of the respondents indicated that people's lack of interest does not affect the provision of infrastructural facilities in the study area. it implies that the effect of access to socio-physical infrastructural facilities for sustainable rural development is affected by many factors like lack of funds, high cost of materials, effects of government policies, attitude of rural dwellers and people's lack of interest.

Conclusion

From the review of major finding of the study, it was obvious that the contribution of the government in initiating and implementing access to infrastructural facilities for sustainable rural development is very poor. In this area, community initiated project failed because of poor planning and inadequate resource while that of nongovernmental organization failed due to top-down approach, mismanagement of fund and political influence.

Community self-help efforts as indicated by the respondents have continued to remain the fulcrum of access to socio-physical infrastructural facilities on sustainable rural development. Since no government in Nigeria will be able to provide all the funds need for development in rural communities, concerted efforts should be made to stimulate and facilitate the spirit of self-help project among rural people.

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