

**SELF-HELP PROJECTS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN ORUK ANAM  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The importance of self-help projects on community development cannot overstressed. It has become one of the development approaches that have improved the social and economic wellbeing of rural dwellers, especially the development of infrastructure. This study is aimed at examining self-help projects and community development in Oruk-Anam Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between road construction projects and community development and that there is no significant relationship between healthcare facilities and community development. The system theory forms the theoretical framework for the study. With an expo facto research design, Taro Yamane sampling framework was used to select forty (40) households as the respondents for the study. The data obtained from the instrument was tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of data analysis showed that the hypotheses were rejected and the alternate accepted. The implication is that self-help projects; road constructions and the provision of health care facilities significantly affect community development. The study recommends that there is a need for the government and corporate organizations to complement community efforts by providing infrastructure in rural communities. This is believed will support economic activities in the area.*

**Key words:** *Self-help, Projects, Community, Development and Oruk Anam.*

## INTRODUCTION

According to Ottong and Bassey (2009), “the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers has been a serious concern to development policy designers”. Frank, Anam and Njirinze (2017) added that, this is, perhaps so because of limited access by rural dwellers to economic resources and services. To advance the course of rural and community development, studies shows that community groups have successfully organized themselves to provide basic infrastructures such as roads, built bridges, schools, etc. (Abah, 2015). Self-help projects are born out of the problem of underdevelopment and the need to enhance the living condition of the vulnerable rural poor. “Self-help project is as old as man and has been with man from human history. These efforts of self-improvement were motivated by the awareness that the needs and aspirations of the people could be best realized through concerted self-efforts” (Akinbode, 2007). The practice of self-help projects and community development is very important in the process of community development. The concept of community development is seen as an organized effort to improve the condition of the community life through self-help projects (Dunhan, 1960). This underscores that community development is a planned programme of change. It is the process that encourages self-help programme (Ottong

and Bassey, 2009), directed at improving the social and economic lifestyle of the people.

Furthermore, Pioneer (2014) noted that “community development is the process of improving the [quality of life](#) and economic [well-being](#) of people living in [rural areas](#)”, often “relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas” (Inkorn, 2000). Ogunleye, Adetona, Oladeinde (2013) stated that, “it is a process by which a set of technical, social, cultural, and institutional measures are implemented, for the inhabitants of rural areas with the aim of improving the socio-economic conditions of the rural populace”. They added that, Community development constitutes a development effort to raise the level of awareness and living conditions of rural dwellers, it is in the process of improving the standard of living some community members came up with the idea of selfhelp” (Ogunleye, Adetona, Oladeinde 2013). Mainly, the key objectives of community development revolve around the productivity, welfare, and quality of life of the rural people with self-help projects initiatives.

Self-help projects have are successful and significant in enahncing the quality of life of rural dwellers (Shaibu, 2014). These projects include community roads, markets centres, community schools, village squares among

others. While this is true, there are constraints that undermines the efforts of community dwellers in designing and implementing self-help projects. This study will examine the extent to which self-help projects improve the socio-economic wellbeing of community dwellers. It is focused on self-help projects and community development in Oruk Anam, the local government area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

According to Frank and Anam (2017), “Community development remains a key concern in Nigeria”. The challenge of community development has remained a great concern to the development experts especially as it affects the infrastructural and physical development of most communities, especially in the rural areas. Most communities in Africa have been perpetually underdeveloped and to avert these challenges, there emerged the idea of self-help projects. In spite of the lofty and good intention of the self-help project, the initiative has been faced with some limitations that serve as a bane to the effective development of the community. The issue of infrastructural development in most communities in Nigeria and Africa as a whole is so miserable that the self-help project initiative is inevitable. In contemporary Nigeria, self-help projects have been faced with legions of problems that have served as a bane to Community development. Most of the limiting factors include community value. The

community members see the development plan as a “new culture” with a high propensity to eliminating their traditional cultures. This community value is sometimes attached to the poverty of thinking among the community members. These values sometimes affect the uptake and implementation of self-help projects.

Abah (2015) maintained that, “as it relates to rural areas, promotion of economic growth and the provision of social amenities to enhance the standards of living of the rural people are often neglected leading to the absence of basic infrastructure like school, medical facilities, road facilities, water supply among others” (Abah, 2015). Despite the efforts made in the past to promote community development through self-help projects, the conditions of the rural dwellers have not improved, rather they have further deteriorated. Akpan (2006) holds the idea that the government and its agencies retains the duty to take care of the needs of its citizens. The idea however, decoyed communities from participation in self-help projects. The consequence of this is a lack of support systems like adequate infrastructures for economic activities in rural areas. Frank and Anam (2017), admitted that “poor infrastructure hinders communication, resulting in social isolation among the rural poor, many of whom have limited access to media and news outlets”.

At all levels of economic planning, Frank and Anam (2017) disclosed that “most countries are struggling with value-based decisions about community development and the meaning placed on rural and regional hinterlands and this system tends to affect community development”. Abah (2015), had stated that “the difficulties many communities have in taking or maintaining action or self-help project is not necessarily due to lack of venture capital, poor access to funding, or limits to community engagement, but sentiments and illiteracy”. This leads to poor or inadequate healthcare facilities, low educational facilities, road construction, and other indices of community development. Most states in the Niger Delta region are grossly lacking and challenged which manifestation is seen in agricultural stagnation, hunger, illiteracy, poverty, disease, and unemployment to mention but a few. That is due to inadequate infrastructural facilities in most rural communities of Nigeria, there has been rural-urban migration.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The general objective of the study is to examine self-help projects and community development in Oruk Anam local government area of Akwa Ibom State,

Nigeria. Specifically, the study will:

1. Examine the extent of a significant relationship between road construction projects and community development

in Oruk Anam local government area of Akwa Ibom State.

1. Assess the extent of a significant relationship between the provision of healthcare facilities and community development in Oruk Anam local government area of Akwa Ibom State.

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

The work is set to test the following hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between road construction projects and community development
2. There is no significant relationship between healthcare facilities and community development.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Self-help projects and community development**

According to the (WHO, 2016) “the selfhelp approach is an approach for combating poverty in a sustainable way. It empowers the poor, especially women socially, economically, and politically. Self-help project is basically directed towards the development of community especially the rural communities”. According to Alabi (2016), “self-help projects empower the rural communities to live a life of

dignity within their locality especially the infrastructural development". Anam (2014) mentioned that "Self-help approaches to community development focus on poverty eradication because poverty is not merely material deprivation but a continuous process of disempowerment. It includes denial of rights and opportunities, isolation, discrimination, domination, and displacement". Alabi (2016) stated clearly that, "This boring problem is accompanied by social and political marginalization and the isolation of the weak. The targeted group of the self-help approach of community development is the poorest women in a village or the poor quarters of cities". They are approached and invited to be a member of a self-help group. In the group, they experience communality. This sense of togetherness is an important element of the self-help approach.

In a self-help project, there is mutual support and togetherness among the people in the community. This approach according to Achalo (2017) "allows members of the community to share their worries and challenges help and visit each other to promote self-esteem among the community members. This is an important initial experience for the very poor which strengthens their self-esteem and above all boosts further development in a sustainable way therefore, this approach (self-help) is people and community-oriented".

According to the (WHO, 2016), "the selfhelp approach sees every human as having a

potential of strength and abilities which by providing the right environment can be unleashed to enable him/her to lead a life of dignity". Hence, according to the approach, the very poor can become active members of their community and cease to be passive recipients of the handout. The individual is vulnerable, voiceless and powerless, but can develop enormous strength in the self-help approach. "The difference in development between rural and urban settings in Nigeria is brought by the government concentrating social amenities in the state capital and local government council headquarters" (Ehor, 2016).

Alabi (2016) stressed that, "There is no doubt that individuals in the rural areas as well need the social amenities that are provided in big towns to enable the people to feel comfortable for better habitation".

He added that, "the social amenities initiated and provided by communities include postal agencies, pipe-borne water, electricity, maternity centres, and dispensaries to mention a few". Jim (2015) viewed communities' originated activities as self-help projects in the bid to contribute to government's drive in developing their rural communities. This supports the goal of development and community development in particular. The outcome leads to progress and economic improvement.

Todaro (1995) had acknowledged that development is the "process of improving the

quality of all human lives. He enumerates three important aspects of development. These include; raising people's living levels in terms of income and consumption levels of food available and accessible medical services, education etc. through relevant economic growth processes". Anam (2014) stated that, "Community development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas who are often relatively isolated and sparsely populated area". Community development approaches used include selfhelp approach, agricultural approach, sectoral approach etc. "Rural communities are often perceived as severe, and isolated which are protected from the modern urban problems" (Margallif 2014). People in rural communities often see themselves as one and related by blood or locality. This sometimes makes them resist change and development approaches that will transform the community. Like most parts of the world, self- projects support the effort towards development and community development in Nigeria. This is supported by the findings in a study conducted by Cobham, Nkpoyen, Ojong, Kenneth, Francis, and Anam (2021) that "women's involvement in self-help projects is vital to the enhanced well-being of rural dwellers. It was recommended in the same study that women should see their participation in community self-help projects as their significant contributions to rural community socio-economic well-being". The study of Abang and Obong (2021) revealed that

education of people influences their participation in community development programmes. Hence, 'education will help enhance interest and voluntary participation in community development programmes'.

### **Road construction projects and community development**

Road construction is important in any community whether developed or developing. It is only through a good road network that the process of development and transformation of the rural communities becomes a reality. Good access road boosts economic activities and also reduces the cost of transportation; it encourages access to farm produce and other important farm products and takes them out for sales in an urban market. Ebong (2003) maintained that road construction improves the performance of rural markets making them more competitive to the direct benefit of farmers other than their middlemen. It also adds value to the community in terms of basic amenities. In some communities, road construction is the product of self-help project initiatives of the community members or private individuals. Also, in his opinion, the access road to rural areas enhances the effectiveness of the public policy on the socio-economic wellbeing of the rural dwellers. Akinola (2013) argued that water transportation through good jetties reduces forces of movement through the highways in cases of bad roads. The transportation network of most communities has improved because of the initiative of self-help projects in some

communities that are poorly developed and lack the presence of physical infrastructure.

Ugochukwu (2006) carried out a study on Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) federal road network projects and community development in Abia State, Nigeria. The findings showed that road projects whether completed, ongoing, or newly awarded for construction have significantly helped to transform the landscape of rural communities in the Niger Delta Region. The study also revealed that the commission selected roads for construction considering their economic, social and political importance to the community. The study concluded that through the construction of federal roads network, development has incidentally transformed the rural communities and some local governments in Abia State can now boast of asphalted roads in their headquarters. Therefore, road construction either as a self-help project or initiated by the government agencies tends to improve the community development of the benefiting community. According to Sylvester (2006), NDDC through road construction has inspired in the people of these communities the spirit of selfemployment and promote community development. "Transport plays a significant role in the social and economic development of any country" (Sylvester, 2006). According to the WHO, (2016) "infrastructure can deliver major benefits in economic growth, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability".

"The social evaluation approach set out below assumes that redistribution of welfare can be more efficiently done through investment in roads than through direct transfer payments, such as subsidies" (WHO, 2016). The organisational report further stated that "of all forms of transport, road transport has the smallest proportion of fixed to total costs, making this market sector highly competitive and thus, less prone to monopoly behavior. The fixed costs of operators with non-specialized fleets who carry full truckloads and do not own any terminal facilities are very low". It added that, "The financial barriers to market entry for these operators, especially in cases where their vehicles are hired or leased, and even more so for single-vehicle operations, are very low, and this market segment is highly competitive" (WHO, 2016). "The creation and use of new and improved roads (especially access roads) and other public road transport facilities (passenger transport terminals and transfer facilities, especially in lower-income areas) can lead to a more equitable distribution of welfare and income". Cohbam et al (2021) stressed that "the fundamental point of departure is that additional income is relatively more valuable to lower-income groups than to higher-income ones". The users of public transport facilities and services, for example, "are mostly transit-captive travelers as more often than not they do not have the ability to pay for travel on alternative modes of transport, and they are, by



implication, the most needed component of the community. The assumption implies that road construction is a catalyst for economic development” (Cohbam, et al 2021).

### **Healthcare facilities and community development**

From the philosophical perspective, “health is wealth”, implies that health is the most important thing in any human existence. In most communities in rural areas, there is inadequate or absence of healthcare facilities, this has been a propelling force for self-help projects initiative to improve the health status of the community members.

Man, naturally appreciate good health and that is why he does everything possible to keep fitness which further explains that without health, one wish for death. Good health is a means for the realization of a developed society and nation at large. It enhances productivity and economic efficiency in the labor force. World Health Organization admitted “that good health is an indispensable tool for the exercise of other human rights, therefore, health is a complete physical, mental and social wellbeing of an individual not merely the absence of disease” (WHO, 2016).

According to Nyong (2003), children, youths, and adults in rural areas will be protected from diseases such as malaria, diarrhea, cough, measles, HIV/AIDs, and tuberculosis (TB) with the availability of healthcare facilities. Access

to healthcare facilities promotes the social health and economic wellbeing of the local population, with particular reference to women and children. It also offers hygiene, nutrition, and agricultural techniques to the local families. The presence of healthcare facilities will grant the rural dwellers access to the facilities at any time and the people will be empowered health-wise and thereby encourage hard work which enhances livelihood and community development. Some communities are underdeveloped because of mortality arising from poor healthcare facilities. This implies that healthcare facility is directly proportional to community development. Interestingly, health is considered by both old and young to be almost significant as it takes only a healthy individual to acquire and maintain wealth.

In some regions like the South-South part of Nigeria, the self-help projects for community development have been supported by some government agencies like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). This supports the study of Akpan (2006). He conducted a study on self-help projects and community development in Bayelsa state. The study concluded that Nigeria National Petroleum Cooperation (NNPC) has also created an impact in the areas of self-help projects in collaboration with the community. It provides healthcare facilities including the Roll Back malaria health Centre in local government areas of Bayelsa state. The centres have all the



modern and essential facilities for a standard health institution and this is a reflection of community development. More so, in 2001, UNDP had

“an agreement with the New Nigeria Foundation (NNF), an affiliate of citizens international of Boston, USA to prevent and treat malaria to facilitate and promote community health services for sustainable community development of the rural areas of Africa especially Nigeria”. The fund was provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Hence, the provision of healthcare facilities promotes community development.

Most rural dwellers, especially “women do not have access to good medical health services” (Anam, 2014). “They are exposed to a lot of poor sanitary conditions. Inadequate access to safe water and sanitation leads to various health problems of people” (Otu and Anam, 2016). This vulnerability calls for timely intervention, thus the need to improve health care service delivery in rural communities through self-help projects.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **System Theory**

The study adopts the System theory. System theory was developed by Von Bertalanffy in (1947) other system theorists include Durkheim and Weber, both of whom were early pioneers in the field of sociology.

“They took early systems theory from the biological organisms and applied it to human social systems. Durkheim was interested in how societies were organized and how they maintained cohesion or group identity over time” (Von Bertalanffy, 1947).

He believed that “human beings experience a unique social reality not experienced by other organisms and that order can only be maintained through the consent of individuals within the group who share the same morals and values”. In his 1893 doctoral dissertation, later published as *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim (1984) explained “that in highly organized systems, the division of labor contributes to the maintenance of societies”.

“The community is a system of the larger society. This system creates development initiatives through project design, implementation, and monitoring. Some of the projects designed by the community support infrastructure development in agriculture, education, health, road constructions, etc” (Ugochukwu, 2006). There are economic systems that support the development of the rural communities. The theory is relevant to the study; hence it is adopted to strengthen the argument that the community is a system that must function effectively in supporting the development process.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The work adopts an expo facto research design. This design helps the researchers in generating

primary data using a representational sample to test the hypotheses stated to guide the study. The area of study was Oruk Anam Local Government Area (LGA) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Oruk Anam has common boundaries with Ukanafun and Abak in the North, in the South by Ikot Abasi, in the East by Mkpato Enin and in the West by Ukanafun and Imo River running through the borderline of Rivers and Abia States. According to the 2006 and projected census, the area has a population of about 172,444 persons.

Oruk Anam is one of the eight Annang speaking local government areas. It was created from the former Abak Division.

“There are deposits of sandstones and gravel along the coastal and river plains of the area. Clay is also deposited in Inen Ikot Essien and Inen Abasi Atai (Ndot Clan), Ukpom Edem Inyang (Ekparakwa Clan) and Ikot Owuk (Ibesit Nung Ikot Clan). The area is naturally rich in agro-allied resources, e.g. palm oil and kernel, timber, cassava, banana, plantain, fruits, and vegetables” (Ebong, 2003). He added that “Commercial activities like farming, petty-trading, fishing, palm wine tapping, pottery, weaving, and hunting are carried out in this area. The study area consists of the following villages Asakpa, Ekefe, Etok Inen, Etok Nkwo, Ikot Nkwo, Ikot Akpaya, Ikot Eduep, Ikon Ekon, Ikot Ekput, Ikot Ese, Ikot Eteyen, Ikot Etim, Ikot Ibram, Ikot Ndo, Ikot Obio Idang, Ikot Effiong, Mbiasso, Nto Udeo-Akpan Oku Ururk and Okukuk from these villages that the farmers will be drawn”.

The population of the study consists of male and female who are currently into farming and has benefitted from the services of the extension workers. Some of the self-help projects executed in the study area include primary Healthcare Centre (PHC), Pipe born water, Grading of Feeder Roads etc. The sampling techniques adopted for the study consist of the cluster, simple random sampling technique, and systematic sampling techniques. Firstly, political wards were used as a cluster for the study. The second stage was the selection of villages from the political wards using the simple random sampling technique. Here, the names of the villages were written on the pieces of paper and put in a bowl, and were randomly selected ward by ward (ten villages). The third stage was the selection of communities using the systematic random sampling technique. Here, forty (40) communities were selected from each village. Ten (10) households were selected using the systematic techniques, from this household, the respondents were drawn especially, farmers. But where there are no eligible respondents, the next house was considered. Data for the study was generated through primary and secondary sources. The primary source was the administration of structured questionnaire, while published information in journals, textbooks and other library information were from the secondary sources. The research questionnaire was structured into two major subsections covering the respondents' socio-demographics, the independent and dependent

variables of the study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation

There is no significant relationship between road construction and community development.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Test of hypotheses

Hypothesis one: analysis through the use of Special Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

### Correlation Analysis Coefficient of the Relationship between road construction projects and community development

Variables	M	SD	EX EY	EX <sup>2</sup> EY <sup>2</sup>	EXY	r-value
Road construction	19.00	19.80	1690	13870	72939	0.50
Community development	6.78	5.91	8719	978040		

#### Significant at 0.05 level, critical r=0.116

The result in table 2 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.50 is less than the critical r-value of 0.116 at 0.05 level of significance (error limit of the study) with this result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between road construction and community development is rejected, while the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

#### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS Road construction and community development

From the hypothesis tested, the result shows that road construction promotes community development. That implies that the finding supported the study of Ebong (2003) who maintained that road construction improves the performance of rural markets making them more competitive to the direct benefit of farmers other than their middlemen. It also adds value to the community in terms of basic amenities. In some communities, road construction is the product of self-help project initiatives of the community members or private individuals. His study further supported the opinion that access road

The finding is also related to the work of Akinola (2013) who argued that water transportation through good jetties reduces forces of movement through the highways in a case of bad road. The transportation network of most communities has improved because of the initiative of self-help projects in some communities that are poorly developed and lack the presence of physical infrastructure. Therefore, it can be established that there is a positive relationship between self-help projects and community development using the indices of pipe born water, electricity, good roads arising from community efforts.

#### **Healthcare facilities and community development**

From the finding, the result revealed that there was a significant relationship between the healthcare facility and community development. The finding was supported by the study carried out by Nyong (2003) who noted that in most communities in rural areas, there is inadequate or absence of healthcare facilities, this has been a propelling force for self-help projects initiative to improve the health status of the community members. Man, naturally appreciate good health and that is why he does everything possible to keep fitness which further explains that without health, one wish for death. Good health is a means for the realization of a developed society and nation at large. It enhances productivity and economic efficiency in the labour force.

World Health Organization admitted “that good health is an indispensable tool for the exercise of other human rights, therefore, health is a complete physical, mental and social wellbeing of an individual not merely the absence of disease” (WHO, 2016).

#### **CONCLUSION**

The study was set to examine self-help projects and community development in Oruk Anam local government area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the variables of research were road construction projects and community development as well as the provision of healthcare facilities and community development. The result of data analysis shows that the hypotheses were rejected and the alternate accepted. The implication is that self-help projects; road constructions and the provision of health care facilities significantly affect community development. However, data obtained from the study area further reveal that there are constraints such as inadequate funding, mismanagement of projects funds, social-political problems, and lack of cooperation among stakeholders and community members. These constraints affect the sustainability of self-help projects in the area.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are therefore recommended to bring about accelerated sustainable and community development in the study area.

1. There is a need for the government and cooperate organizations to fund community projects in the study area and other rural communities in the country. In this regard, existing companies in the community should perform their co-operate social responsibility that will enhance the completion of self-help projects.
2. There is a need for the government to institute an effective financial management system for self-help projects to be viable. In achieving this, through its institutions, the government should put in place practicable checks and balances in the form of committees of men of proven integrity in place in the community.
3. More self-help projects should be encouraged by various communities in Nigeria. With the peculiar need of rural areas, projects such as the provision of educational facilities, healthcare facilities, road construction, and provision of pipeborn water among other basic amenities in the community should be carried out.
4. To encourage communal effort, the government and corporate bodies must be involved in the provision of infrastructure in community areas across the country.

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