



Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency (CRSCSDA) and Poverty Reduction: An Impact Assessment

Awatt, Nsungo Anwakang
Department of Economics
University of Calabar, Calabar

Abstract

The interest in community development has assumed a global concern. This study examines the role of CRSCSDA in poverty reduction in the state. Survey design research design was adopted for the study. Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources. The study was conducted in Cross River State. Three local government areas (LGAs) were carefully selected from the three senatorial District of the State. In the Northern Senatorial District was Ogoja, in the Central, Ikom and in the South, Odukpani local government area was chosen. This selection was intended to represent the entire State. 150 respondents were selected, choosing 50 respondents from each LGA. The selection was purposive to reflect the appropriateness need of the sample population. The selection included, Farmers, Business men and Civil Servants. A research questionnaire was designed and used in generating data. Data obtained was analyzed using chi square statistical technique. Result obtained from the analysis of data shows that the provision of basic roads by the Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency has significantly improved the income level of the community dwellers. The study therefore recommends that more efforts should be instituted by the State and Federal government to provide more access roads in rural communities in the State.

Keywords: *Poverty Reduction, Community, Development, Access Roads*

Background of the Study

The efforts to improve the social and economic conditions of rural community in most developed and developing nations, of which Nigeria is part, have taken several forms. These efforts are justified by the claim that poverty is more prevalent in rural communities (Ebong, 1999). People have been making careers of stimulating improvement or development of communities before and after the nation gained independence from colonial powers. Antai (2007) disclosed that there is no clear point at which a type of approach directed toward this end became identified as "community

development". The antecedents are many, tracking back into history, but it was in the post World War II period that the term gained popularity. Activity under this banner, much of it in the then colonial world, was enough that by the 1950s, sections of the United Nations felt compelled to attempt to define it (United Nations, 1955). From then on, agencies, associations and scholars have been proposing and promoting measures for community development with abandon (Sanders, 1958; Ad Hoc Group, 1963; Lotz, 1970; Warren, 1978; Christenson and Robinson, 1980).

Despite considerable efforts and policy actions, poverty has continually become a major characteristic of rural communities, especially among developing economies (Antai, 2007). Peculiar to rural communities include problems of social inequality, insecurity, illiteracy, poor health, restricted or total lack of opportunity for personal growth, self-realization, poor quality and quantity food intake, among others. These have led to various searches of effective measures to tackle this menace. Like other developing nations of the world, Nigeria has for about four decades searched for ways of overcoming poverty, especially at the community level. In the 1960s, the approach was to industrialize the economy. In the 70s and early 80s, attention shifted to agriculture under the so-called '*green revolution*' programmes. Later in the 1980s, the country was advised to embark on structural adjustment programme in order to promote the kinds of activities that would generate growth and reduce poverty. The later part of the 90s to date saw government's attention being shifted to poverty alleviation and anti-corruption. In line with the above effort of the Federal Government the various state governments came up with different programmes in order to alleviate poverty in their respective domains.

In Cross River State, programmes intended to tackle poverty include Cross River State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (CR-SEEDs), and its counterpart at the Local Government level known as Local Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (LEEDs), Cross River State Agricultural and Rural Empowerment Scheme, Community-Based Poverty Reduction Projects (CPRP), Youth Empowerment Scheme among others. However, an evaluation of the above measures shows that it did not meet up with the intended objectives. The approaches failed to produce the expected results (Antai, 2007). Informed by this, the economy of rural communities has remained a toddler, struggling to find a direction out of poverty.

Thus, it is the recognition of this social and economic gap that the Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency was established in 2001 as a strategic framework in addressing the problems peculiar to rural communities in the state. The agency is saddled with the responsibility of providing basic amenities in selected communities in the State; such amenities include among others, construction of class room blocks, market stalls, bridges and culverts, mini water projects, provision of electricity and health centers.

Well like other development agencies, the agency, since established has had varying degree of successes and limitations. According to Ayagba (2009), these call attention to the fact that the condition of rural communities in the state remains in a troubles state. The

evidence lays in the persistence of rural poverty, resulting from lack of access to education, health facilities, portable water, electricity, access to roads and so on. The consequences are low literacy level and poor health standards due to undernourishment and diseases as well as low economic productivity. This research examines the role of the Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency in achieving poverty reduction through community driven and individual empowering initiatives.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian rural communities are noted for their high degree of poverty (World Bank, 2006). Millions of poor children in rural communities do not attend schools (UNDP, 2007). Their social and economic lives are characterized by inadequate access to employment opportunities, physical assets such as land/capital, reduced access by the poor to credit even on a small scale and insufficient access to market where the poor can sell goods and services. They have poor health, nutrition and sanitation. Housing is inadequate and there is little opportunity to change these conditions.

The governments have shown concern in addressing problems of rural underdevelopment. Some of these programmes formulated by government to ameliorate the problems include Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) 1976, the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) 1976, Green Revolution (GR), 1980 and the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRJ) 1985, Better Life Programme (BLP) 1986, People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN) 1986, Family Support Programme (FSP) 1987, Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) 1988, etc. These efforts have been affected by poor implementation, administrative corruption in form of embezzlement of funds meant for the implementation of rural projects. For instance, in 1976, the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was rolled out by the Murtala/Obasanjo government. The concern at this time was to bring down the escalating prices of food items and reduce the rate of food importation. But it turned out to produce more millionaires at the expense of rural farmers.

In the attempt to improve upon past failed policies, the Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency was set up in 2001, to among other things, provide basic amenities in rural communities in the State. Such amenities include construction of class room blocks, market stalls, bridges and culverts, mini water projects, provision of electricity and health centers. The research will therefore examine the extent to which the agency has been able to achieve the objectives of reducing rural poverty.

Objectives of the study

Generally, the study is designed to assess the impact of the Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency (CRSCSDA) in achieving poverty reduction. In specific terms, the study will assess the role of CRSCSDA in providing road network and its impact in improving the income level of community dwellers in the state.

Hypothesis

There is no significant impact between the provision of road network by Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency and improvement in the income level of community dwellers.

Literature and theoretical framework

Developing effective strategy for poverty reduction in local communities poses serious challenge to policy makers, sociologists and economists. This literature review will examine different policy measures and approaches adopted over time in achieving poverty reduction and the impact these policies have had in improving their social and economic conditions.

Community Poverty and Development in Nigeria

There are many ways to define community (Christenson and Robinson, 1980). Each of the standard definitions may be sufficient in most situations, but they vary in terms of the elements included. For a general operational definition, Ering (2004) noted that a community is a particular type of social system distinguished by the following characteristics:

- a. People involved in the system have a sense and recognition of the relationships and areas of common concerns with other members.
- b. The system has longevity, continuity and is expected to persist.
- c. Its operations depend considerably on voluntary cooperation, with a minimal use (or threat) of sanctions or coercion.
- d. It is multi-functional. The system is expected to produce many things and to be attuned to many dimensions of interactions.
- e. The system is complex, dynamic and sufficiently large that instrumental relationships predominate.
- f. Usually, there is a geographic element associated with its definition and basic boundaries.

The distinguishing characteristics involve matters of degree. For example, the predominance of instrumental relationships does not imply the absence of affective relationships. It is practical to work from the assumption that people take part in community systems as a means rather than as an end. Communities are expected to produce goods, services or situations. Careful attention must be paid to geographic characteristics. Everything and every person within the geographic area are not associated with the community system. In the geographic area used as a reference in defining a community, alien people, structures or even communities may be present. Communities of different scales may overlap in a geographic area. Further, all the people available to perform roles, and all the roles and structures operating as part of the system may not be located in the referenced geographic area.

In community development, the term development is taken as a reference to a particular type of conscious effort to stimulate improvement. In this sense, all positive changes are not the result of development. There is a set of ideas used to differentiate development from other forms of positive change. These are:

- i. A system subject to change exists,
- ii. Change will take place incrementally, within a process, over a rather extended time.
- iii. Once this process has begun, it is very unlikely that the system will be able to return to the original state.
- iv. The process is stimulated and given direction by conscious effort.
- v. During the conscious effort to provide direction, a theory/model of development provides reference points and expectations.
- vi. At each stage, the system is in a configuration it has not experienced before.
- vii. It operates as a learning process.
- viii. Accomplishments in the process can be evaluated only in terms of the judgments of people in the system.
- ix. The results are judged to be more positive than negative and worth the costs.

According to Ebong (1999), community development is a structured intervention that gives communities greater control over the conditions that affect their lives. This does not solve all the problems faced by a local community, but it does build up confidence to tackle such problems as effectively as any local action can. Community development works at the level of local groups and organisations rather than with individuals or families. The range of local groups and organizations representing communities at local level constitutes the community sector. Community development involves a skilled process and part of its approach is the belief that communities cannot be helped unless they themselves agree to this process.

Ering (2000) said, community development has to be looked at in both ways: not only at how the community is working at the grass roots, but also at how responsive key institutions are to the needs of local communities. Where Community development takes place, there are certain principles central to it. The first priority of the Community development process is the empowering and enabling of those who are traditionally deprived of power and control over their common affairs. It claims as important the ability of people to act together to influence the social, economic, political and environmental issues which affect them. Community development aims to encourage sharing, and to create structures which give genuine participation and involvement.

Community development is about developing the power, skills, knowledge and experience of people as individuals and in groups, thus enabling them to undertake initiatives of their own to combat social, economic, political and environmental problems, and enabling them to fully participate in a truly democratic process (Ebong, 1999). Community development must take the lead in confronting the attitudes of individuals and the practices of institutions and society as a whole which discriminates unfairly against black people, women, people with disabilities and different abilities,

religious groups, elderly people, lesbians and gay men, and other groups who are disadvantaged by society. It also must take a lead in countering the destruction of the natural environment on which we all depend.

Community development is well placed to involve people equally on these issues which affect all of us. A community is a particular type of social system distinguished by the following characteristics: People involved in the system have a sense and recognition of the relationships and areas of common concerns with other members. The system has longevity, continuity and is expected to persist. Its operations depend considerably on voluntary cooperation, with a minimal use (or threat) of sanctions or coercion. It is multi-functional. The system is expected to produce many things and to be attuned to many dimensions of interactions. The system is complex, dynamic and sufficiently large that instrumental relationships predominate (Ering, 2000). Usually, Antai (2003) admitted, there is a geographic element associated with its definition and basic boundaries. The distinguishing characteristics involve matters of degree. Communities of different scales may overlap in a geographic area. Further, all the people available to perform roles, and all the roles and structures operating as part of the system may not be located in the referenced geographic area.

The challenge of Poverty in Rural Communities in Nigeria

Poverty is the state of being in which individuals and groups lack necessities of life and are less privileged than other members of the society. In this sense, poverty is more than economic condition. Clearly, the horror of poverty extends to all aspects of a person's life, which include among others, susceptibility to disease, limited access to most types of services and information, lack of control over resources, subordination to higher social and economic classes, utter insecurity in the face of changing circumstances including of course its psychological effect-erosion of human dignity and self-respect (Adeleye, 2005).

In a similar vein, Central Bank of Nigeria (1999) defines poverty as essentially involving lack basic- needs combined with impaired access to productive resources. Such basic needs include food, shelter, water and clean environment, healthcare, basic education, working skills and tools, security and political as well civic rights to participate in decision-making. The absence of these basic needs is often reflected in individual's inability to meet social and economic obligations. This inability is dependent on limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, potable water and sanitation, thus limiting the chance of advancing welfare to utmost level of capability. Poverty is a social condition of serious deprivation or lack of resources and materials necessary for living within a minimum standard conducive to human dignity and well being (Antai, 2007).

Ugal (2001) refer to poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption needs, which mean, in other words, that there is an inadequate level of consumption, this giving rise to sufficient food, clothing and/or shelter. For Sen (1999), poverty is the lack of certain capabilities such as being able to participate with dignity in society. Poverty has also been defined as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. The report constructed

two indices based on a minimum level of consumption in order to show the practical aspect of the concept. While the first index was a country specific poverty line, the second was global, allowing cross-country comparisons (Usman, 2008). The United Nations has invoked the use of such other indices as life expectancy, infant mortality rate, primary school enrolment ratios and number of persons per physician. One deduction that could be made from the different definitions of poverty is that, for a given country in a given circumstances, poverty must be conceived, defined and measured in absolute qualitative ways that are relevant and valid for analysis and policy making at that given time and space. Poverty specifications should therefore become relative, once circumstances in the country change.

In the position of Oscar (2002), poverty is a situation whereby the basic necessities of man are either totally absent or exist in negligible quantities or state to make a meaningful impact. Sociologists refer to poverty as a social problem because it affects a number of people in a way considered unacceptable. Okowa (2005) said poverty is a condition of deprivation, which comprises social inferiority, isolation, physical weakness, vulnerability, powerlessness and humiliation.

The poor are seen as those who are stable job, own property or maintain healthy conditions of living. They also lack adequate level of education and cannot satisfy their health needs. Offem (2003) sees poverty as a multidimensional concept, which embraces undesirable conditions such as inadequate income, malnutrition and lack of access to social services and lack of social and political status. Pointing out the various categories of poverty, Ering (2000) noted that poverty is categorized into "absolute poverty" and "relative poverty". The former (absolute poverty) refers to extreme inadequacy in the essential of foods, clothing and shelter. It means malnutrition or starvation, chronic ill healthy, low life expectancy, rags and slum. "Relative poverty" on the other hand is comparative. It is a question of inequality. This category of poverty does not pose many problems. It is taken as a way of life, as stratification, inequality is present in any human group because all men are equally endowed with talents and opportunities.

Community-Based Poverty Reduction Projects (CPRP)

The Federal Government in 2000 set up this agency in seven pilot States of Abia, Cross River, Ekiti, Kebbi, Kogi, Rivers and Yobe for the purpose of partnering with these states to provide poverty alleviation projects in each of the states especially in the rural areas.

The agency commenced operations in the state in 2001, and was saddled with the responsibility of providing basic amenities in selected communities. Such amenities include among others, construction of class room blocks, market stalls, bridges and culverts, mini water projects, provision of electricity and health centres-with a maximum time frame of between 11 and 18 months for the execution of projects. The agency staff normally carries out appraisal of projects, monitoring and evaluation. With a policy thrust of poverty alleviation, the agency gets her fund from the World Bank in collaboration with the African Development Bank (90%) the concerned community

(10%), which the state government provides yearly counterpart funding (operational cost) (Offem, 2009). The selection of beneficiaries, is however, demand driven with applications from desiring communities. Because a major chunk of the fund is provided by the bank, communities with low response are often given priority. That is, communities with less number of projects due to low response are normally considered first.

In line with the agencies' blueprint, before any project is embarked upon, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of such project is normally carried out first. This is usually done by the agency in conjunction with Ministry of Environment (Offem, 2009). Accordingly, the programme is intended to achieve the following:

- i. Growth and development of rural economics,
- ii. Tackle the problem of rural/urban migration,
- iii. Provision of infrastructure and services in rural communities,
- iv. Improvement in the standard of living of citizens of the state,
- v. Ensure greater social justice through the improved provision of social services and amenities, and
- vi. Remove barriers to progress by eradicating ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and disease among the inhabitants of the state.

Challenges of Poverty Reduction and Community Development Initiatives in Nigeria
Considering the level of poverty in the State and the outcome of the selected poverty alleviation programmes aimed at tackling poverty, it is clear that the programmes have not fared well. This is owed to several constraints within the policy process. For instance, the execution of 309 projects across the State during the period under review is minimal. More so, some projects visited were sub-standard. This minimal number and sub-standard nature of projects is attributed to the following:

- 1) **Inadequate funding:** Funds available for the execution of poverty alleviation projects are limited in spite of overwhelming demand. According to responses from officials of the agency, this, has by extension affected the number of projects executed.
- 2) **Lack of complementary effort on the part of local government areas:** Is another factor responsible for low performance of the agency.
- 3) Interviews with some of the agency officials disclosed that counterpart funding is often required from communities before projects are executed. Such counterpart funding is supposed to be the statutory responsibility of the Local Government Areas, but often time such communities were left alone to raise funds. This slowed down the pace at which projects were executed while others closed down.
- 4) **Bad topography:** The State has a very bad topography and is vast in size. This resulted in increased cost of moving materials and humans to projects sites.

Theoretical framework

Integrated Rural Development Approach

Hallet (1996) is the proponent of the integrated rural development approach. He maintained that community development involves a pattern of integrated development activities that are varied with the scale and functions being performed. The degree of operational coordination among specific activities fluctuates. Further a substantial number of action areas perform with a high degree of independence. The intelligence, information, resources, technologies, designs, skills and energies generated by such independent operations may be integrated only after they reach the stage of outputs of the constituent structures.

An integrated approach turns on the capacities of the system to differentiate the kinds of integration that fit the variety of circumstances. An integrated approach is likely to involve both centralized and decentralized control patterns. Its effectiveness depends on the system's ability to articulate various modes of structuring. The capacities of the whole community system profit from the variety of ways the constituent parts can work. It encompasses the systems and holistic functions earlier discussed above, and as such it stands suitable as the most suitable framework recommended by this study.

Methodology

Survey design research design was adopted for the study. Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources. The study was conducted in Cross River State. Three local government areas (LGAs) were carefully selected from the three senatorial District of the State. In the Northern Senatorial District was Ogoja, in the Central, Ikom and in the South, Odukpani local government area was chosen. This selection was intended to represent the entire State.

150 respondents were selected, choosing 50 respondents from each LGA. The selection was purposive to reflect the appropriateness need of the sample population. The selection included, Farmers, Business men and Civil Servants. A research questionnaire was designed and used in generating data. Data obtained was analyzed using chi square statistical technique.

Data analysis and discussion of results

Hypothesis

There is no significant impact between the provision of road network by Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency and improvement in the income level of community dwellers.

Statistical tool: Chi-square (X^2)

Table 1: Chi-square (X^2) response distribution to assess the impact of provision of basic road network in rural communities by Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency and its impact in improving the income level of rural dwellers

Variables	Responses				TOTAL
	SA	A	D	SD	
Basic road network	28 (18.4)	18 (22.2)	38 (36.7)	22 (24.7)	106
Income level of community dwellers	8 (7.6)	12 (9.8)	14 (15.3)	13 (10.3)	44

Cal X^2 - 9.91, Table value of Chi -7.82 Level of significance- .05 Degree of freedom -3

The response on Table 1 shows that the provision of basic roads by the Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency has significantly improved the income level of the community dwellers. The response as indicated in the table shows that the computed value of X^2 stood at 9.91, while its tabulated value at 0.05 level of significance and 1 degree of freedom is 7.82. The result further reveals the following,

1. Newly access roads has helped the farmers to have easy transportation of their produce to markets
2. Access rural roads have become a catalyst to business opportunities in the rural communities. Rural economic advantages is now been fully appreciated
3. Easy access to the market has led to reduction in the problem of having farms produces, especially perishable produces like vegetables get bad before they reach the market. This has helped increase the profit margin of rural farmers and encourage the propensity to save
4. Access road has increased the interest of rural dwellers, especially, children to go to school. This was not the case in the past because accessibility to schools was difficult. With the opening up of roads, educational activities has grown rapidly in the rural areas
5. Health risk has also been reduced, as health centers are easily assessed without necessarily having to walk along distance through bus tracks, etc.

Since the rural economy depends much on road transportation, in that it facilitates agricultural and other socio-economic activities, the provision and maintenance of the access road is a sine qua non for the development of the rural economy. Aliyu (2004) confirmed that the development of small scale business which has been recommended as a strategy for improving the rural economy, hinges on access roads. Good roads need not be tarmac, but even a well-graded gravel road for the rural dwellers is appreciated when one has to travel to a hospital or to source a market with better prices. Institution as the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA) is important in ensuring that the country's road network is up to scratch. Since the FERMA came into being, previously having been known as the National Roads Board, it has been instrumental in funding the development

and maintenance of major roads in the country.

Antai (2007) emphasized that access rural roads are important elements in rural development, as it facilitate all aspects of development; agriculture, health, education, forestry, fisheries, small-scale industries, trade, commerce etc. that depends on good communication. Rural transportation network will give shape to the living environment of villagers; rather roads of rural transportation are the connectivity elements in our society. Appropriate combination of various links both technically and economically can generate rural traffic infrastructure, which should be prepared for the measure of land development. Rural road connectivity is not only the key component of rural development; it is also recognized as an effective poverty reduction programme. An improved accessibility to all quarters of a village is an indispensable prerequisite for the provision of adequate living conditions in rural areas. The interdependency in change of land use and transportation is not promoted in rural areas and this keeps the economic system inactive in these areas. The absence of roads in rural areas leads to stagnation of socio-economic conditions of the villagers.

However Hague (2007) added that proper maintenance is critical because rainstorms can be tremendously intense. Thus, small areas of road decay can very rapidly expand under the forces of erosion and weathering in the rainy season. Much of the problems associated with the erosion of roadways are compounded by the lack of adequate drainage infrastructure (which also makes driving hazardous during heavy rains). This concern calls for prompt and adequate attention.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study examined the role of CRSCSDA in poverty reduction in the state. Result obtained from the analysis of data shows that the provision of basic roads by the Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency has significantly improved the income level of the community dwellers. The study therefore recommends that more efforts should be instituted by the State and Federal government in providing more access roads across communities in the State. There is also need to institute structures for effective maintenance of created roads.

References

- Adeleye, F. (2005). "National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP): Effects on employment generation in Nigeria." Retrieved July 2, 2010 from www.napepnigeria.com.
- Aliyu, G. (2004). "Macroeconomic policy and poverty reduction". Washington: International Monetary Fund and World Bank.
- Antai, A. S (2004). "Restructuring Nigeria's fiscal system: a rationale for the effective performance of local government areas." *Duncan Journal of Social Science*, 6 (7), 83-92.
- Antai, A. S. (2007). "In search for a corrupt free nation- a new paradigm for sustained development in Nigeria." *International Journal of African Culture, Politics and Development*, 2 (5), 21-51.
- Central Bank of Nigeria, Research Department (1999). "Nigeria's development prospects: Poverty assessment and alleviation study ". Abuja: Central Bank of Nigeria.
- Ebong, S. F. (1999). "Rural Development: principles and practice." Ibadan: *NISER*
- Ering, S. O. (2000). "Nigerian rural development policies and social engineering: Issues of theory and practice." *Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development*, 1 (1), 21-23.
- Hallet, G. (1996). "Development policy in sub-Saharan Africa after 15 years of structural adjustment." *American Rural Development Review*, 4 (2), 22-24.
- Offem, I. D. (2003). "Rural Development Programme of DFRRI in Cross River: A pessimistic view." *Journal of the Institute of Town Planners*, 8, 55-57.
- Okowa, W. F. (2005). "Nigeria: Poverty reducing growth strategies and options." Abuja: Central Bank of Nigeria.
- Oscar, G. (2002). "Impact of rural development policies in the Nigerian economy." *Journal of Management Sciences*, 7 (2), 111-112.
- Sanders, W. Q. (1958). "Rural Poverty in Africa" London: Macmillan
- Ugal, E. (2001). "The dimensions of policy Implementations in Nigeria: Issues of theories and practice." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 8 (5), 26-27.
- Usman, B. (2008). "Contemporary issues in local government administration and rural development in Nigeria." Ibadan: Routers Press.