

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN URATTA COMMUNITIES IN OSISIOMA NGWA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA ABIA STATE

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### Abstract

Rural development involves a package of measures aimed at transforming and modernizing the rural areas and its population and integrating it into the national development plan in order to stamp out the scourge of poor rural life and its environment and to improve enormously the standard of living and socio political life in the rural population. The paper examines the impacts of the strategies the government has embarked upon to alleviate poverty in the rural communities of Uratta in Osioma Ngwa Local Government Area in Abia State. Ten communities were randomly selected out of twenty communities in Uratta in Osioma Ngwa L.G.A. Stratified method was adopted in selecting the respondents. Well structured questionnaires were distributed to one hundred and twenty five (125) respondents based on socio economic characteristics and other variables and only eighteen (18) respondents returned their questionnaires. The communities selected for the study were chosen due to their strategic location and potentials in agricultural production in the area. Collected data were analysed using simple percentages and frequency counts and mean statistics. In view of the results, the cumulative mean for research questions 1,2 and 4 were rejected and null hypothesis accepted. Cumulative mean for research question 3 was accepted and null hypothesis rejected. Most government efforts and strategies to achieve sustainable rural development in Uratta communities in Osioma Ngwa Local Government Area were not successful. It was therefore recommended that the government should embark on building of infrastructure, completion of the abandoned ones, renewal of the credit and savings scheme, establishment of small scale agro processing industries to handle processing of agricultural produce. These measures will certainly alleviate poverty, create jobs and ease pressure on the urban areas.

*Keywords: Rural development, Strategies, Osioma Ngwa LGA,  
Uratta communities, Agriculture.*

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### **Background to the Study**

Rural development is a daunting challenge to the Nigerian government and other countries in Africa. Several development programmes had been embarked upon by successive governments in Nigeria but did not make the much desired impacts on the lives of the rural population but ended in unmitigated failure. A lot of resources (financial) have been injected into rural development but all in vain Yakubu, (2009). In spite of all the resources and strategies adopted to address rural development challenges, inequality and abject poverty remain pervasive in the rural areas.(Nchuchuwe and Adejuwon (2012). Since the agricultural sector lost its role as the cornerstone of Nigerian economy, the importance of rural development suffered a serious set back and neglect and it no longer attracts the government's attention it deserves.

Nigeria is predominantly a rural society as the vast majority of the population dwells in the rural areas. Ele (2006). A shift in government's policy towards agriculture and rural development consequently leads to isolation of the rural population and creates a negative impact on agriculture which is the main source of livelihood in the rural areas. Agriculture contributed 70-80% of the Nigerian export commodity and foreign exchange earning before the discovery of oil. ECA (2007). Current estimates of the rural population were put at over 80% of the entire population of almost 150 million people. About 70% of farmers consists of rural women who contribute enormously to agricultural production. It is estimated that 70% of the world's poor reside in the rural areas and in most developing countries, rural areas suffer from high level of poverty than urban areas CTA (2011). In spite of majority of Nigerian population being engaged in agricultural production, Nigeria spends over N1.1trillion Naira (5 Billion Dollars) on importation of wheat, rice fish and sugar annually and despite being blessed with vast arable land and vibrant population for farming amidst economic hardship facing the country IFAD (2015). According to IFAD, Nigeria has 84 million hectares of arable land, but only 40% of it is cultivated thus making our agricultural cultivation highly unproductive.

The central bank of Nigerian (CBN) in her report in 2015 disclosed that between January and May, Nigeria spent \$575 million dollars on importation of wheat and \$374 million on fish importation. One will be constrained to believe the debacle in government policy on agriculture given to the fact that some of the products on the list of agricultural imports could be produced in Nigeria. If this trend continues unchecked, it could have a devastating effect on the economy of the country. The huge outflow of foreign exchange on food importation means that Nigeria is using money it should have invested in agriculture and rural development to indirectly develop agriculture and create jobs in countries from where the products are imported. Current trend in Nigerian economy indicates that the economy has taken a nose-dive given to the price of oil which continues to plummet. This underscores the need for the government to reconsider her policy on economic development and diversify the economy by investing in agriculture and rural areas to reduce over dependence on oil export. Nigeria now lags behind other countries in agricultural production and in export of agricultural produce whereas it was a leading exporter of agricultural produce in West Africa before the discovery of oil.

In 2013 Nigeria rebased its gross domestic product (GDP) data which pushed it above South Africa as the continent biggest economy. GDP totaled 80.3 trillion naira (307.6 billion pounds;509.9 billion dollars) the Nigeria statistics office said. That compares with South Africans GDP of \$370.3 Billion dollars at the end of 2013. BBC Business News 6<sup>th</sup> April (2014), but despite the position of the Nigeria economy on the continent, majority of Nigerians live in poverty as this does not reflect in the living standard of most Nigerians. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that a staggering 112.519 million Nigerian live in relative poverty conditions is alarming. This figure represents 69 percent of the country's total population estimate to be 163 million. More worrisome is the fact that poverty rate is rising at a time that GDP growth rate is put at 7.75 percent NBS (2007).

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. Determine if farmers in the rural communities of Uratta in Osisioma Ngwa Local Government Area in Abia State benefit from credit and savings scheme of the government of Abia State.
2. Assess the government effort on building infrastructure in Uratta communities of Osisioma Ngwa local Government and also completing the abandoned infrastructure projects.
3. Determine if the establishment of small scale agro processing industry by the government and private sector thus boost agricultural production and improve the earnings of the farmers in Uratta communities.
4. Encourage rural entrepreneurship in order to alleviate poverty reduce unemployment and improve standard of living in Uratta communities of OsisiomaNgwa Local Government Area.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The rural areas of Osisioma Ngwa Local Government Area of Abia State have suffered years of neglect by successive governments be it the local governments or the state governments. Uratta Communities in Osisioma L.G.A are strategically located as they have vast fertile agricultural lands. The roads linking these communities to urban areas are completely dilapidated due to many years of neglect. In spite of these appalling conditions in these areas, Uratta communities still remain the food basket to the urban areas of Aba. Given to these reasons, the communities have been plagued by criminal activities and high rate of unemployment. The inhabitants are impoverished and majority cannot afford the fundamental necessities of life hence the need for the government to introduce strategies for rural development in Uratta communities of Osisioma Ngwa Local Government in order to alleviate poverty and reduce unemployment problems.

### **Conceptual Framework and Literature Review**

Rural development involves a package of measures aimed at transforming and modernizing the rural area in its population and integrating it into the national development plan in order to stamp out the scourge of poor rural life and its environment and to improve enormously the standard of living and sociopolitical life of the rural population. Rural development ensures the modernization of the rural society and the

transition from its transitional isolation to integration with the National Economy.

Nchuchuwe and Adejuwon (2012). Ojonemi et al (2014) highlighted rural development as a multidimensional approach by which productivity, income and quality of life in terms of health, nutrient, education and other characteristics of satisfactory life of the rural people can be improved. It ought to be designed to touch various aspects of life in the rural areas and change the negation of rural traditional life and its stagnant and backward ideology which has remained the same for years. The approach to accomplish a good rural development plan should be comprehensive and suitable for the rural areas concerned in order to avoid poorly planned programmes which end in failure.

Rural development may be centered around income criterion in which the concept is made up to address the problem of rural poverty or it may be defined in sociological concept in which the rural poor represents a reservoir of untapped talents a target group that should be given the opportunity to enjoy the benefit of development through improved education, health and nutrition. Rural development is that development that seeks to enhance the quality of life in the rural areas by providing basic infrastructural facilities Ele (2006). The fundamental aim of rural development is to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of the rural people. Ugwuanyi and Chukwuemeka (2013) rural development is targeted at the rural poor to alleviate poverty and create opportunities and gateways to exit from poverty. Rural development involves the economic empowerment of the rural population Otto and Ukere (2014) noted that rural development implies a broad-based re-organization and mobilization of the rural matters so as to improve their capacity to cope effectively with daily tasks of their lives and with changes consequent upon it. Rural development does not only involve economic transformation, it is faced to include human development which is essential for a successful rural development. Human development helps to harness the skills and potentials from the doledrums of rural conditions.

Ele (2006) emphasized that rural development is not only just to provide for the rural area but also requires the full participation of the participation of the rural people to develop themselves and their, environment. Rural development is further defined as the improvement of sustainable livelihood. The concept of rural development is used confusedly with agricultural development, however Rural development encompasses all aspects of human life in the rural areas as it can be described as a work in progress, a process of transformation, a moving target and a continuing desire to be better. It involves the development of the poorest sector of the society, the sick, depressed, unemployed, less educated, misinformed and the disadvantaged. Can we help them, what are our roles, are we stakeholders of development, can the government help them or just observers and on lookers? Sanjay (2013).

Otigba (2013) defined rural development as a strategy designed to improve the socioeconomic and social life of the people in the rural areas. He added that rural development constitutes a process of planned change for which one approach or the other is adopted for the improvement and transformation of the lot of rural populace. Lack of

infrastructural development is hindrance to rural development. Most rural communities in Nigeria and other African countries have virtually no infrastructure which include needs such as access road, clean water supply, electricity, schools and health facilities. Rural development is a multi-sectoral. It does not only involve agricultural development, though agriculture is a pertinent aspect of rural development. It is not sufficient for a sustainable development and economic growth. Other sectors such as health, education and other activities outside the agricultural sectors are vital IFAD (2015).

### **Rural Population**

Rural development refers to people living in rural areas as defined by National Statistics Offices. It is calculated as the difference between the total population and urban population. World bank (2014). Nigeria's rural population is estimated to be over 79 million (News 24.com.ng). It is difficult to reach a consensus in defining the term rural areas in many countries. There is no single internationally accepted definition of "rural" as a concept. The reasons are as follows;

1. The various perceptions of what is rural and of the elements characterizing rurality.
2. The inherent need to have a tailor made definition according to the object analyzed or policy concerned.
3. The difficulty to collect relevant data at the level of basic geographical units. Rural development in EU statistical and economic information report (2013).

The term rural may not be early defined since rurality varies from continent to continent based on the level of development, characteristic and criteria used in classifying an area to be rural. The context of what is rural in Africa completely differs from that at Europe or North America. Olojede et al (2013) mentioned that defining what is rural is a daunting task because the word "rural" is an inexact term that can mean different thing to different people.

Olawoye (1987) noted that rurality is dependent upon its relationship with urbanity for its meaning. Ele (2006) refers countryside as an area whose population engages mainly in production activities like agriculture, fishing and rearing of livestock. Generally the rural areas are typically poverty stricken characterized with malnourished population, inhabitants living in poor health conditions with short life span, absolute denial of basic infrastructure, lack of clean water, high percentage of illiteracy and very low income. Extensive gap exists between the urban and rural areas.

Ojonemi et al (2014), characterized life in the rural areas as hard, rustic and sometimes inhuman. The National Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with World bank implemented the general household survey (GHS) and in the survey reported enormous disparity, between the rural communities and urban areas in access to communication and infrastructural. Olofede et al (2013), described the state of the rural communities as highly deplorable and pathetic with the main features of the rural communities to be depression, degradation and deprivation. The basic infrastructure to support human life is generally lacking.



Ugwuanyi and Chukwuemeka (2013) observed in their comments that rural areas in Nigeria are characterized with deplorable road network and absence of all year round reliable access road. The conditions are made worse given to the topographical location of these rural areas as some are located on hills and valleys that continuously face the menace of erosion which creates deep gullies and pot holes on the few access roads. Another striking feature of the rural areas is lack of clean water supply. This makes the rural population vulnerable to water borne diseases. Mostly the source of water for the rural inhabitants are streams, stagnant water and shallow wells which are often contaminated and pose serious health problems. Most rural dwellers live a traditional life style with a lot of superstitious beliefs which hinder them from modernization and accepting changes that can transform their lives. This way of life wears down the moral and enthusiasm of the rural population.

Rural areas lack basic educational facilities or schools and when some are available, the structures and environment do not meet the standard for healthy and suitable environment for learning. The structures are dilapidated and without the basic facilities for a school. Okoli and Onah (2002) noted that the privilege of education which for instance is supposed to be a birth right of every Nigerian child is an illusion to many poor rural dwellers. In some places there are no schools at all while some others are shabby, ill-equipped and poorly staffed.

High birth rate or population growth is associated with ignorance and illiteracy Olojede et al (2015). Population growth in the rural areas is so high that the rural dwellers can hardly fight poverty on their own instead this worsen their deprivation. Abah (2010) observed that rural areas in Nigeria are depressingly characterized with very low income and as such the rural dwellers cannot the means of livelihood. Typically, rural communities apparently lack hospitals, maternity homes and clinics equipped enough to handle health issues. Few health centres are located in a few rural communities. The health centres are usually ill equipped and poorly staffed with health personnel and often overwhelmed to serve the highly populated rural communities. Okoli and Onah (2002) observed that in most rural areas in Nigeria, no medical institution of any kind exists at all, the people have to travel far to get at them. Agriculture which is the main occupation of the rural population is mainly traditional with very low yield per hectare which can barely feed the rural populace. High population growth and low productivity in agriculture has resulted to escalating food price which poses a serious threat not only to rural population but also to the urban areas and as such mal nutrition is pervasive in the rural areas. Olojede et al (2015) notes that a panel of physicians in Nigeria reported one out of every four children under the age of three suffers from stunted growth. It was further noted that population growth is far much higher than the annual agricultural output which is said to be 3.18%.

### **Strategies that Enhance Rural Development**

Strategies aimed at achieving successful and sustainable rural development must be the ones that can alleviate poverty and improve the living and social standard of the rural population. Such strategies should include rural population poverty alleviation

programmes designed to reduce rural poverty.

The achievement of the millennium development goals is at the centre of sustainable development. Sustainable rural development is vital to the economic, social and environmental viability of nations. It is essential for poverty eradication since global poverty is overwhelmingly rural Onyenekenwa (2011).

1. Introduction of credit and savings scheme for the rural farmers, craftsmen and women. This will enable farmers to purchase farm implements, improved seeds, seedling and fertilizer for cultivation in their localities. Craftsmen and women who engage in wood carvings, paintings, weaving, pot making and so on could also benefit enormously from this scheme.

2. By increase access to financial services including both credit and savings the livelihood of farmers can be improved substantially CRSP(T), (2007). Rural people have the propensity to make savings. Easy access to credit and accumulated savings can enable participating rural dwellers plan their economic activities not only as farmers but also the craftsmen and petty traders. This has spurring effect on the moral and motivation of the people to work hard to resolve their commitments. And particularly to the farmers, they will be encourage to stick to the land in order to boost productivity and increase their earnings and consequently improve their standard of living.

3. Economic integration of the rural areas in the National/State development plans. Economic development and transformation is not achievable without developed rural areas: Rural development is foundational and a stepping stone to achieving sustainable development. Rural neglect brings negative consequences such as exodus of rural dwellers to urban areas, with resulting problems of unemployment, crimes, prostitution, child labour, insecurity, money laundering, bribery, poverty, proliferation of shanty living areas, spread of disease, and over stretching of the facilities and infrastructures in the urban areas (Harande 2009).

The Federal and State Government in Nigeria should adopt an exclusive development plan for the rural areas. Rural development should constitute pertinent items in both federal and state budgets to realize a full economic integration of the rural areas and provide all resources the rural areas need to advance. Economic integration of rural areas with neighbouring urban areas and creation of rural run off-farm employment can narrow rural-urban disparities, expand opportunities and encourage the retention of skilled people, including youth in rural areas Onyenekenwa (2011). If rural development could be integrated into development plans of the government, it therefore means it will apparently receive attention and allocation just like in other sector. This will equally mean a milestone in government development pursuits and approach, thereby bringing an end to the perpetual neglect of the areas have being facing. There is need to co-opt agricultural development plans since agriculture is the bedrock of livelihood in the rural area. Integration of sustainable agricultural development policy cannot be overemphasized. A strong and dynamic agricultural sector is an important foundation for rural

development. Implementation of agricultural development policy is an effective way of eradicating poverty. Some of the fundamental measures necessary to enhance agriculture development is by ensuring the participation of the rural people during the promotion of modern techniques and agricultural systems and make them easy to understand and adopt and also cheap and affordable Otigba (2013) Rural farmers should have access to high yielding crops which can increase crop yield per hectare, accept the use of fertilizers to boost crop yield and better use of information technology. Farmers should be enlightened on measures to contain erosion and land degradation. Erosion could be controlled by careful selection of appropriate crops, keeping ground cover on the soil and contour plugging. Lack of consistent land management, policies has consequently led to soil depletion without replenishment. CSD (2009).

4. Establishment of Small Scale Agro Processing Industries: Establishment of small scale agro-processing factories to handle the processing and storage of farm produce in various communities. Food processing storage and preservation are factors that have been hindering agricultural production. The government should encourage investments in food processing and preservation in order to create job opportunities in the rural areas and discourage the youth from migrating to the urban areas. Processing and preservation of seasonal food crops could encourage rural farmers to produce more and make their income source a sustainable one all year round at the same time tackle the problems of food wastage. Farmers could transport produce after harvest to processing places where they are treated sorted and packaged and sent to markets for sale and distribution. Post harvest treatment of the agricultural produce reduces losses incurred by farmers and maximizes their profits and increases their earnings. Encouraging food processing should be part of the government plans to strengthen the agricultural sector. Food processing is major job creation activity that employs mainly women. Food processing has been identified as a sector with high growth potential despite challenges of import competition. PACN (2012)

5. Monitoring the policy implementation of rural development programmes: Rural development projects are always poorly implemented. There are several projects that are left uncompleted; poor supervisor and blind acceptability of acclaimed completed projects are the bane of Nigeria rural development Ojonemi et al (2014). Several projects to enhance rural development have failed and this has led to loss of huge amount of money ear market for such projects. Trends indicate that government have always adopted policy for rural development without proper implementation of them. Adoption of rural development policy does not necessarily mean that the implementation reflects what exists on paper nor that the policy is implemented accordingly. Policy implementation means translation of the policy unto workable details. This involves translation of the abstract policy to actions and programmes that make the policy operational. This translation may be quite complex and will include a lot of negotiations, adjustments, improvements, changes and contributions. Chukwuemeka et al (2013) In order to prevent failure and improper implementation, policy, implementation process needs to be monitored and evaluated. The monitoring involves checking whether not the



goals and targets of rural development are being reached and to allow for timely adjustment to correct the inconsistencies. Assessment examines the progress in a project towards implementation of rural policy development.

6. **Encouraging Rural Entrepreneurship:** Although agriculture is the major source of income to rural communities. Non agricultural activities for rural population is gaining ground in areas of blacksmithing, carpentry, spinning, tailoring and catering, sachet water, production and food vendors and ice cream production, interior decorators, petty trading and motor bikes. Government should encourage and support these entrepreneurs by providing them with small credits so that they can keep their heads above water.

7. **Building of infrastructure:** Infrastructure is the master key that can spur rural development. Good access roads to rural communities are essentially important to life and occupational activities of the rural people. The roads are useful for the evacuation and transport of farm produce to the urban areas for sale and distribution. Lack of access roads have so much hindered the development of the rural areas and thus constitutes misery and a great deal of difficulties to life.

Road, electricity supply and other infrastructure are limited in all rural areas and they are of key importance to stimulate agricultural investment and growth. Rural infrastructure is not only a key component of rural development but also an important ingredient in ensuring any sustainable poverty reduction programme. (Otto and Ukpere (2014). Development of infrastructure in the rural areas improves rural economy and quality of life. It enhances productivity and increases agricultural incomes. Infrastructure is pertinent to agricultural development and agriculture is generally the primary source of income in rural areas both through crop production and indirectly through on-farm and off-farm in agriculture related industries Jouanjean (2013). Agro processing industry and low cost processing activities by farmers require electricity to function. Rural electrification is therefore essential to enhance development. Most of the access roads are either untarred or lack maintenance. In some cases the rural communities are cut off from the urban areas due to deplorable conditions of the road. A lot of harvest rot away or perish due to problems of transportation to the urban areas where there is large demand and market for them.

8. **Healthcare functional facilities** should be made available to the rural communities. There is generally high incidence of morbidity and mortality resulting from prevalence of preventable diseases due to unevenly distribution of health facilities in the rural communities. Rural dwellers have limited access to medical facilities as they are virtually lacking in their communities. The rural dwellers have to travel long distance to seek for medical attention. Availability of these facilities will reduce their sufferings a lot of rural people hardly have access to clean drinking water and as such water-borne diseases are prevalent.

9. Mass literacy campaign Mass literacy campaign for the rural population could help to improve the social standard of the people and liberate them from ignorance. The literacy campaign should be open to people of all age categories. Their ability to read and write could improve their understanding modern farming techniques. (Olojede et al (2013) More schools should be built in the rural areas equipped to have conducive learning environment. Literacy could help change people's attitude and understanding of things. The objective of rural development can be better achieved by improving literacy rate of the society.

### **Methodology**

The study was carried out in ten (10) communities in Uratta of OsisiomaNgwa Local Government Area which is geographically located on latitude  $5^{\circ} 8' 59''$  N and longitude  $7^{\circ} 8' 49''$  E. in southern axis of Abia State The research instrument employed consist of well structured questionnaires based on the research topic and the stated objectives. The questionnaires were distributed to one hundred and twenty five(125) respondents based on socio economic characteristics and other variables and only one hundred and eighteen(118) respondents returned their questionnaires. The ten communities were randomly selected. Stratified method was adopted in selecting the respondents. Likert scale was used to evaluate the response of the respondents.

### **Research Questions**

Four research questions were posed to address the problems of this paper.

1. Do farmers in the rural areas of Uratta communities in Osisioma Local Government benefit from credit and savings scheme?
2. Does the Government build infrastructure and making effort to complete abandoned projects in Uratta communities of Osisioma Ngwa LGA?
3. Can the establishment of small scale agro processing industry by the government and private sector boost agricultural activities and improve earnings of the farmers in Uratta communities in Osisioma Ngwa L.G.A?
4. How would rural entrepreneurship help increase the earnings, reduce unemployment and improve the standard of living in uratta of Osisioma Ngwa L.G.A?

### **Research Hypothesis**

To answer the research questions, four null and alternative hypotheses was formulated;

- H0: The benefits of credits and savings scheme has no significant difference in the farmers that are located in the rural communities of Uratta, OsisiomaNgwaL.G.A ,Abia State.
- H1: The benefits of credit and savings scheme has significant difference in the farmers that are located in the rural communities of Uratta, OsisiomaNgwaL.G.A ,Abia State.
- H0: Embarking on infrastructural projects has no significant difference on the standard of living of farmers in the rural areas.
- H1: Embarking on infrastructural project has significant differences on the standard of living of farmers in the rural areas.

- H0: Establishment of small scale Agro Processing industry by the government and private sector has no significant difference in the agricultural productivity of the farmers
- H1: Establishment of small scale Agro Processing industry by the government and private sector has significant difference in the agricultural productivity of the farmers
- H0: Rural Entrepreneurship has no significant difference in the standard of living farmers in Uratta, Osisioma Ngwa L.G.A, Abia State.
- H1: Rural Entrepreneurship has significant difference in the standard of living farmers in Uratta, Osisioma Ngwa L.G.A, Abia State.

### Method of Data Collection

The data were collected from the response to the questionnaires by the respondents. The researcher analyzed the collected data using simple percentage and frequency.

### Method of data Analysis

The data gathered from the respondents were analyzed and presented in frequency counts and mean statistics of answers to the research questions with four (4) point likert scales of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agreed (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. The mean or average point is 2.5 that is using the formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N} = \frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

### Presentation and Analysis of data

1. Do farmers in the rural areas of Uratta communities in Osisioma Ngwa Local Government benefit from credit and savings scheme?

**Table 1**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total		Remarks
1	The government provides credit/loans to farmers in Uratta of OsisiomaNgwa L.G.A to encourage them in their activities in order to alleviate poverty.	-	-	30	88	118	1.25	Rejected
		-	-	60	88	148		
2	Farmers have easy access to credits/loans for their occupational activities	-	-	10	108	118	1.08	Rejected
		-	-	20	108	128		
3	Farmers are aware of credits scheme provided to farmers by the government of Abia State.	2	5	40	71	118	1.47	Rejected
		8	15	40	71	174		
4	Provision of credits/loans Abia State to farmers in Uratta of OsisiomaNgwa has helped to improve their incomes and alleviated poverty.	-	-	28	90	118	1.23	Rejected
		-	-	56	90	146		
	<b>Mean</b>						<b>1.26</b>	<b>Rejected</b>

- Does the Government build infrastructure and making effort to complete abandoned projects in Uratta communities of Osisioma Ngwa LGA?

**Table2**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total		Remarks
1	The government has built access roads to improve communication and movements in the communities thereby improving the living conditions.	-	-	51	67	118	1.43	Rejected
		-	-	102	67	169		
2	Availability of access roads to urban areas in your communities has improved transport of agricultural produce to the urban area.	-	2	60	56	118	1.54	Rejected
		-	6	120	56	182		
3	Electrification projects, pipe borne water supply by the government has improved rural life in the communities.	-	10	108	51	118	1.08	Rejected
		-	20	108	51	128		
4	The government has built more schools and health centres in the communities of Osisioma L.G.A. to reduce analphabetism and improve on health care in the communities	3	10	54	51	118	1.70	Rejected
		12	30	108	51	201		
	<b>Mean</b>						<b>1.44</b>	<b>Rejected</b>

- Can the establishment of small scale agro processing industry by the government and private sector boost agricultural activities and improve earnings?

**Table 3**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total		Remarks
1	Establishment of small scale Agro processing industry in the communities is necessary for processing of agricultural produce in order to increase agricultural productivity and add value to agro produce.	90	28	-	-	118	3.76	Accepted
		360	84	-	-	444		
2	Establishment of small scale agro processing industry will create jobs in the communities and contribute in poverty alleviation.	98	20	-	-	118	3.83	Accepted
		392	60	-	-	452		
3	The government of Abia State has contributed to the development of the rural communities in Uratta of Osisioma L.G.A by building agro processing industry in the communities.	-	-	50	68	118	1.42	Rejected
		-	-	100	68	168		
4	Post harvest treatment of agricultural produce can help reduce losses incurred by farmers and increase earnings.	53	65	-	-	118	3.45	Accepted
		212	195	-	-	407		
	<b>Mean</b>						<b>3.12</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

1. How would rural entrepreneurship help increase the earnings, reduce unemployment and improve the standard of living in Uratta of OsisiomaNgwa L.G.A?

**Table 4**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total		Remarks
1	More young people are engaging in agricultural activities in rural communities of Urban in Osisioma L.G.A.	5	10	53	50	118	1.75	Rejected
		20	30	106	50	206		
2	Non agricultural activities such as carpentry, blacksmithing, tailoring, catering, food vending are gaining ground in the rural communities.	37	56	15	10	118	3.02	Accepted
		148	168	30	10	356		
3	Government policy encourages the growth of rural entrepreneurship in non agricultural activities.	-	-	65	53	118	1.55	Accepted
		-	-	130	53	183		
4	Rural entrepreneurship has led to increase in agricultural productivity and reduced unemployment in Uratta of OsisiomaNgwa L.G.A.	-	-	60	58	118	1.51	Rejected
		-	-	120	58	178		
	<b>Mean</b>						<b>1.96</b>	<b>Rejected</b>



**Table 5: Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	52	44.07
Female	66	55.93
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age range</b>		
30-39 years	39	33
40-49 years	42	36
50-59 years	23	19
60+	14	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Communities</b>		
AmapuIgbengwo	11	9.32
Egbede	12	10.17
EgbeluOwo	14	11.86
Obuzor	10	6.48
Umuokorogbu	8	6.8
Umuochor	13	11.01
Okpokoroala	11	9.32
Umuigwe	12	10.17
Umueke	13	11.01
Umuokiri	14	11.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational Status</b>		
Analphabets	51	43.23
Primary Education	31	26.27
Secondary Education	23	19.49
Tertiary Education	13	11.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farming	45	38.13
Petty trading	3	2.54
Farming & petty trading	24	20.38

Tailoring	2	1.69
Hair Dressing	3	2.54
Mechanics	2	1.69
Civil Service & Farming	15	12.71
Carpentry	2	1.69
Cyclist/Driving	12	10.16
Unemployed	10	8.47
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2016

### Results

The variables under the socio economic characteristics of the respondents are indicated on table 5. They include gender, age range, educational, status and occupation in Uratta communities of Osioma Ngwa L.G.A. With respect to gender the female respondents accounted for 59.93% whereas the male were 44.07%. In the age range, 40-49 years accounted for 33% with the highest frequency.

Among Uratta communities, Egbede and Umuokiri communities paired up to emerge as the communities with the highest respondents accounting for 11.86% respectively. Education status shows high rates of analphabetism which accounted for 43.23% of the respondents in Uratta Communities of OsiomaNgwa L.G.A. Another variable of interest is farming being the most favourable occupation in Uratta rural communities accounted for 38.18% followed by a combination of farming and petty trading which ranked second with 24% and civil service and farming accounting for 12.71%. Cyclist and drivers occupied next with 10.16% whereas there were 8.47% unemployed respondents. Tables 1-4 indicated the statistics mean of response to research questions by the respondents from 10 communities of Uratta

### Discussion

The socio economic characteristics of the respondents indicate that the majority of the respondents were females with 55.93%. This clearly shows the important role of women in the socio economic set up and even in the rural communities where traditionally men dominate. Nseabasi (2015) observed that the role of women constitutes the central pillar of rural development policies and programmes. With respect to age, 42% of the respondents fell within the age of 40-49 years. This age range produces most of the work force of the society. Furthermore, with the age range of 20-39% making 39% of the respondents, demographically, the rural population of Uratta communities could be classified as young and growing population with good prospects in view of high productivity in agriculture and other non agricultural occupations given to its strong labour force. The result equally indicated high level of analphabetism in Uratta communities of Osioma Ngwa Local Government Area of Abia State given to the fact that analphets among the respondents accounted for 43.2% of the entire respondents.

This corresponds with the result of Nwachukwu and Eze (2007), who reported high illiteracy in Ikwuano Local Government Area in Abia State. The government should make more effort to reduce illiteracy which constitutes a hindrance to rural development. Predominance of farming as a major occupation among the respondents in the area underscores the reason why over 90% of food produced in the country comes from the rural areas Njoku and Oddii (1991) and Nwosu and Odii (1999). It was also observed that 10.16% of respondent are involved in commercial transport either as motorcyclist or tricyclists. This non agricultural activity has helped to sustain the livelihood of many youths in the rural and urban areas in Abia State. Olubomehin (2012) in his report observed that okada business in Nigeria is relatively a lucrative one and as such has attracted the interest of many youths to embark on it in order to make some income for their daily needs. Poor conditions of the rural roads make okada the most appropriate means of transport in the rural areas in Uratta communities of Osisioma L.G.A.

Unemployment rate of 8.47% is a thing of deep concern and calls for the government attention for job creation. The cumulative mean on the tabulated response on the benefits of credit and savings scheme to farmers in Uratta communities of Osisioma Local Government area is 1.26 and was therefore rejected since it was below 2.5 and the null hypothesis was accepted indicating that there was no significant difference. This shows that the credit and savings schemes designed to support farmers in Uratta communities did not make the expected impacts. Credit is considered as a catalyst that activates the factors of production and makes under used capacities functional for increased production Ijere (1998). Farm credit plays a crucial role in agriculture and rural development. It enables farmers venture into new fields of production and employ new farming techniques. The cumulative mean on government embarking on building of infrastructure and completing abandoned infrastructure projects is 1.44 and was equally rejected and the null hypothesis accepted. And with no significant difference. The implication of this is that the rural communities of Uratta have not felt the desired changes infrastructure would impact on them. It could be that some of the proposed projects in the communities have not been implemented. Improving mobility is a vital element in allowing access to services to poor rural farmers. Farmers not only need to access markets, but be able to reach markets.

Statistical presentation on the establishment of small scale agro processing industry shows the cumulative mean is 3.17 and was accepted and the null hypothesis rejected. This underscores the need to establish small scale agro processing industries. The inhabitants of Uratta communities are very much aware of the prospects of small agro processing industries in their communities. Small scale agro processing industries will definitely contribute to job creation and poverty alleviation. Almost all agricultural produce comes from the rural areas and that justifies the reason to locate agro-processing industries in the rural areas. Furthermore, the tabulated response on rural entrepreneurship playing a role in increasing earnings , reduction of unemployment indicated a cumulated mean of 1.96 which was rejected and the null hypothesis accepted.andwith no significant difference. This shows that not enough has been done by

the government to encourage rural entrepreneurship in Uratta communities of Osioma Ngwa L.G.A.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Rural development is the gateway to poverty eradication and human development. It is the key to sustainable economic development. The communities of Uratta in OsiomaNgwa Local Government Area have faced years of neglect. There is need for the government to employ strategies to enhance rural development in Uratta communities in order to stamp out poverty and improve the standard of living in Uratta communities. A neglect to rural development is a neglect to agricultural sector of the economy.

In order to realize the strategies of rural development in Uratta communities, the following recommendations have been made:

1. The government should encourage credit schemes that will support the farmers in the rural areas of Uratta communities to purchase simple farm tools and other needs to strengthen their potentials to produce more food. The credit scheme should also be extended to non-agricultural occupations.
2. The government should encourage investment in agro processing industry in Uratta communities in other to boost earnings in agriculture and create non-farm job opportunities and check urban migration.
3. The government should give priority to building of infrastructure in Uratta communities in OsiomaNgwa L.G.A. Access road network linking the communities to the urban areas is pertinent for rural development.
4. Rural development programmes should be subject to monitoring and assessment in order to ensure that development policy is implemented accordingly. In view of its working details, time frame, quality of work delivered and cost of the investment made so far should be commensurate to what is on the paper.
5. The government should demonstrate the political will in order implement the projects related to rural development that can help eradicate poverty and improve the standard of living in Uratta communities and others.

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