

# Re-Gauging Of Self Help Projects and Rural Development in Anambra Local Government System

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**Abstract:** *The study examined the re-gauge of self help projects on rural development in Anambra local government System using Nnewi South local government area as 'locus classicus'. The broad objective of the study is to examine the impact of self help projects on rural development in Nnewi South local government area. The related conceptual, theoretical and empirical literatures were reviewed. The study was anchored on Basic Need Approach. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study constituted three hundred and eight thousand eight hundred (308,800) inhabitants of Nnewi South local government area. Taro Yamane (1967) formular was employed to arrive at sample size of 399. The analysis was done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results indicate that self help projects have helped in providing educational facilities to the inhabitants of Nnewi South local government area. The study also found that self help projects plays significant role in infrastructural development in Nnewi South local government area. Self help projects were found to play significant role in the provision of health facilities in Nnewi South local government area. The study concludes that self-help project have positive impact on rural development in Nnewi South local government area. The study recommends that government should provide periodic subvention to community based organizations involved in the provision of self-help projects to enable them have adequate fund for executing infrastructural development.*

**Keywords:** Community Participation, Gauging, Rural Development, Self-Help Projects

## Preamble

The importance of self help projects in the development of communities cannot be overemphasized. The overwhelming enthusiasm and active interest and participation among members of various communities for self-help projects and development have risen tremendously in the past few years in Nigerian rural areas. The process of rural and community self help projects involves grass root participation which means that the process of initiating by a single group or individual, rather, the local people consult themselves and get involved in the identification of local needs and in the conception and formulation of any project aimed at self reliance and also related development and thus projects will constitute a network of non-governmental agencies, individuals, local unions and associations, elite indigenes among many others (Adedayo, Taiwo & Medupin, 2001).

The philosophy of people's participation in rural development particularly in the developing countries is increasingly gaining acceptance as an important instrument for mobilizing resources and organizing the rural populace to have cogent interests in providing for their wellbeing. Government at various strata such as the federal, state and local government have come to terms with the fact that there is an inherent imperative in "the traditional democratic theory", which advocates rural populace active participation in the Decision-making and implementation of policies that affect and shape their lives (Eme, Eluwa & Uka, 2012).

Wahab (2000) observed that people in developing nations have until recently looked up to their governments to meet their basic socio-economic demands. Of a truth, governments in African nations have evolved top-down and bottom-up approaches to achieve sustainable development of their people. These include establishment of lead industries at key centres so as to create job opportunities, provide basic infrastructure and utilize regional natural and man-made resources to stimulate growth and economic development that would spread to lagging regions (Abegunde, 2003). Besides, Agbola (2002) noted that successive Nigerian governments have responded to both rural and urban problems by evolving poverty alleviation programmes to help stir development simultaneously at the grassroots. The failure of governments' top-down approach and lack of involvement of the people at the grassroots in the bottom-up strategy have weakened the confidence of the public in the central authorities. Communities therefore seek solace in indigenous institutions that undertake development programmes and projects that they observe that are very needful in their immediate communities. The indigenous organizations are associated with self-help (Ogundipe, 2003).

Self-help approach is a new paradigm in the field of rural development, whose main goal is the development of rural areas (Tamuno & Iroh, 2012). Specific objectives of the approach are to increase the well-being of the poor people, and provide infrastructural facilities. It is a voluntary and self-managed group of people belonging to similar socio-economic characteristics, who come together to initiate ideas that will promote sustainable rural development. The self-help approach of rural development in the form of undertaking economic programmes, provide employment, infrastructures that a community can provide for themselves, acquainted with skills and occupational diversification. Also, it provides social welfare programmes to improve health, nutrition and general community welfare. The logic behind self help projects is that individual effort or community effort determines the fate of development in their locality.

This philosophy of development is an attempt made to enlist and inspire the people in the determination of desirable change in goals and in the implementation of programmes to bring about the change deemed desirable. It also highlights rural development

as the involvement of the people. Self-help projects are focused on local participation by the people who identify their needs, plan, take decisions and implement them to enhance their living standard. The idea involves the spirit of “give and take”, joint efforts, social cooperation and self-reliance. Locally, people are advised to say their problems with the view to finding answers to them, depending on their initiatives, this involves the provision of technical and social support services on a mutual basis. Through self-help, unused local resources like the government funds are reserved, and the people at the local level acquire skills, become competent and confident in the management of their affairs. Self-help connotes more food for the needy, better health, better primary /secondary education, developed infrastructure, self-satisfaction and self-accomplishment in the life of rural dwellers (Nath, 2008).

Nnewi South local government area of Anambra State is predominantly made up of rural communities that are semi-urban and agrarian in nature. Towns that make up the local government are Ukpokor, Akwaihedi, Amichi, Azigbo, Ebenator Ozulogu, Ekwulomili, Ezinifite, Osumenyi, Unubi and Utuh. Most of these communities have been neglected by government especially in the area of infrastructural development leaving most part of the areas with poor road network and infrastructure, inadequate health facilities, inadequate social services, lack of portable water and electricity and poor housing. These have made these communities to initiate self help projects particularly in conjunction with the respective town unions in order to bridge in infrastructural gap occasioned by government neglect of the area. These self help projects are known to play a significant role in the improvement of the quality of life of rural dwellers. The role however depends on the extent to which community self-help scheme is adopted as a relevant strategy for rural development. Based on the foregoing, this study examined the impact of self help projects on rural development in Nnewi South local government area.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study.

1. To what extent has self help projects helped in providing educational facilities to inhabitants of Nnewi South local government area?
2. What role has self help projects played in infrastructural development in Nnewi South local government area?
3. What role has self help projects played in the provision of health facilities in Nnewi South local government area?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to make practical and theoretical contributions. Practically, this study will provide insight on how to effectively harness self help projects towards developmental effort in rural communities. It will help government to understand the problems militating against the effectiveness of self help projects in rural development with a view to finding lasting solution. This study will help policy formulators to understand the contributions of self help projects to rural development in Nigeria and at the same time help them to formulate policies that will help initiators of self help projects in enhancing rural development in Anambra State.

Theoretically, this study will provide an insight into the impact of self help projects on rural development particularly in Nnewi South Local Government Area. This study will add to the body of knowledge on self help projects and rural development particularly especially within the Nigerian context. The information on the subject of self help projects and rural development within the Nigerian system are old and outdated and many sources do not offer current information therefore this research will play a crucial role in providing current information.

### **Self Help Projects and Provision of Educational Facilities**

It is often taken for granted that people in the local communities will at one level or the other participate in the development of their communities. Little attention is therefore paid to their level of participation and the outsiders be it government, planners, companies and individuals carry on the development business as if the community is the problem and they are the solution. The result of this, as expected is that most projects designed by the government to develop these rural areas, often fail to achieve totally the set objectives. Every community has a traditional structure to ensure the participation of inhabitants in projects and programmes that have positive effects on the life of the majority. It has been established in this study that projects identified, planned, executed and managed by the community themselves; outlive those imposed by a benefactor with little or no community participation. Sustainable development is what every community wants, and as of right deserve; anything less is not development. The concern now, is to apply same to definite self-help activities of communities to see the impact of these dynamic forces in the attainment of projected goals particularly in the health sector.

Osinubi (2011) noted that community self-help projects are very important intervention strategies for social empowerment, alleviation of poverty, income generation and provision of health facilities. Self-help projects in rural areas may consist of essential services such as health care, public safety and education, as well as affordable housing projects. Programmes on self help projects in Nigeria are basically an attempt to reduce poverty, satisfying basic needs and also provides academic sponsorship for indigent students.

Many of the communities through self-help projects built secondary schools and even offered scholarship programmes for their bright but indigent members in quest of Western education. Oladepo (1996) noted that these communities through self-help projects contribute to the funding of school building projects, class room desks, furnishing of teachers' offices among others. Ugwu (2013) in his study found that communities through self-help projects established and refurbished schools particularly primary and secondary schools across the communities. He further noted that the communities through self-help projects helped in equipping the schools by providing some facilities like chair and tables for both teachers and pupils. In some communities,

self-help projects contributed to repairing of leaking roofs of the schools and constructing of libraries which will inculcate the reading habit in the pupils. In this way help-help projects have contributed in improving the standard of living of the people.

### **Self help Projects and Infrastructural Development**

Infrastructure generally are community services such as communication, health, education and security that are fundamental to the society where they are provided as statutory right to everybody (Ola, 2004). Rural infrastructural projects, therefore, are basic requirements by any settlement for its effective and proper functioning and vital for the overall regional development of the area. Frishchmann (2007) observed that no modern settlement can survive on its own without adequate provision of community infrastructural facilities such as modern markets, water facilities, adequate roads network system, health facilities, communication network facilities and many others to mention a few. The provision of adequate and functional community infrastructure has direct bearing on the economic and overall growth of any community. The poor state of infrastructural facilities in most communities has been a major factor responsible for the slow pace of industrialization of the country. The problems of low and epileptic electricity supply, inadequate and unreliable water supply, and poor telecommunication network have affected industrial activities and establishments and consequently results into high cost of production. The poor state of rural and urban road net work system have brought bottlenecks in the movement of goods and services in the country.

The provision of rural infrastructure is essential to health, national prosperity and business. Accordingly, Isma (1993) has maintained that the existence of satisfactory infrastructure is a pre-requisite of sustainable private sector investment in industry and commerce and without which any effort to realize the objective of economic development plans are futile and inevitably abortive. Thus it was suggested by Sudhi and Yashi (1995) that investment in infrastructure and the associated provision of services are integral to the process of rural development and infrastructural investment was identified as playing key role in agricultural production and as well facilitating the growth of the developing countries. To further debunk the relevance of infrastructural provision in rural development, James (2003) has echoed the needs for developing countries governments to set the stage for better infrastructural provision by promoting good governance and making key regulatory reforms to improve the investment leverage of private sector investment. These needs, he suggested, are vast from the slum to the remote country side.

The provision of infrastructural facilities in any settlement directly or indirectly affects the standard of living of the individuals in that community. Mabogunje (1993) observed that infrastructural provision on an extensive, continuous and self sustaining basis is a sine- qua- non for the efficiency of operation and urban enterprises and the livability of cities; and that infrastructure is the crux of modern urban development. Consequent upon the recognition of the relevance of infrastructure in the development of our communities, various efforts have been made available over the years by the government and private organizations to develop strategies and policies to spread these services to all segments of human settlements. As a result of the global economic recession which adversely affects the third world countries with low financial base to cope with unlimited financial responsibilities, the rural areas have been subjected to high level of deprivation and neglect.

The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) according to Ogbnozobe (2000) have been responsible positively for various forms of physical community infrastructural development in Nigeria, through diverse developmental activities of community based organizations (CBOs) participation in infrastructural provision. It follows, therefore, that not only is it a means of increasing efficiency, but it also strengthens the sense of community ownership of projects and ensures transparency and accountability in project planning and implementation. In that regard, it must be noted that when CBOs and other stakeholders bear part of the cost of providing infrastructural services, their commitment to the success of the project is greater. The self help infrastructure development programme as identified by Nwosu (1987) is a good strategy for rural development with the realization and acceptance of the fact that people recognize that government resource are not unlimited and given the limited resources government cannot provide all the needs of all the communities at the same time. In the process, communities which are relatively in a hurry have always taken recourse to "self-help" and "self-help" has appeared to be a development philosophy embraced more by the rural communities than the urban communities.

Rural development through infrastructural tool cannot be achieved without any proper administrative and institutional frame work in motion. The institutional frame work, according to Oduala, (1987) is essential not only for routine administrative work but for accelerated improvement in the living conditions of people in the undeveloped communities in Nigeria. In the works of Koinyan (1993), it is important to go beyond the provision of infrastructure in rural development because infrastructure where available facilitates the development process but it is the massive participation of the entire populace in the production activities on a self sustaining and self reliant basis that really constitute true development. He, therefore, suggested that the provision of infrastructures and production activities must go together and one without the other will constitute an extremely flawed development process.

As Idode (1999) observed, in the past, self help efforts in Nigeria mainly related to the construction of footpaths or roads, dredging of rivers and streams, clearing of public land and market places. Later, Idode (1999) further observed, the scope of operation included the building of schools and market stalls. Projects such as pipe-borne water, road tarring, dispensaries, cottage hospitals and so on, were not usually attempted. Furthermore he continued, equipment used was simple; hoes, cutlasses, diggers and shovels were generally utilized. The construction of walls did not follow any standard measurements as the people used their imagination to plan and construct such projects. At this stage, there was little or no government involvement as the planning and execution of these self-help projects was the sole responsibility of the people. Where the government was involved at all, was for the purposes of taking

over completed projects for operation or maintenance. But where neither the state government nor the local government councils were interested in such project, the missionaries took over.

Self-help efforts have been adopted as a veritable strategy for achieving rural development in the face of gross government neglect of the rural communities. Respective governments in Nigeria have concentrated socio-economic development in the cities while the rural areas remain underdeveloped and poor. Most rural communities are characterized by illiteracy, neglect, inadequate provision of social services and infrastructure, high birth rate and death rate, low life expectancy and malnutrition. A critical look at Nigeria since independence in 1960 till date will reveal that vast rural communities of the country are in deplorable state. In fact, the development gap between the urban and rural areas in Nigeria is very noticeable (IFAD, 2012). With about 70 percent of Nigeria's total population residing in rural communities (Akpabio, 2005), the incidence of poverty and underdevelopment is evident in lack of social service and infrastructure, unemployment, disease, high infant and maternal mortality, low income, underdeveloped agrarian economy among others have become their lots.

Thus, successful self help projects in rural development in Nigeria implies the acceleration of the pace of developing the rural areas, through the provision of basic needs and necessary amenities like water supply, electricity, job opportunities, development of settlement schemes and feeder roads. The total acceptance of self helps as a strategy for rural development is evidenced in the number of projects initiated in the country by the rural communities in Nigeria. Based on the fact that survival is an innate attribute in human beings, the communities have sought for complementary development strategy since the government could not adequately provide for them. They organized themselves into groups for self-help activities such as the construction and building of health centres, schools, rural roads, village halls, market stalls etc.

#### **Self Help Projects and the Provision of Health Facilities**

In Nigeria, as in many other African countries evidence exists of how groups and communities successfully organized themselves to construct roads, built bridges, schools, etc. 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. The practice of self-help and rural development is by its very nature an on-going process in which those concerned must feel adequately involved. This is because the idea of community felt need arises from the lack of something which in the opinion of the community would facilitate the improvement of the welfare of the community if it had been present or available. It is generally noted that the health status of the Nigerian people is poor, with the nutritional status also poor (Ola, 2004). It has been estimated that only about 57 percent of the country's population has access to modern health care services, with urban centres having a better share than the rural area (Phillips, 1997).

The contribution of self-help development activities to the development of health facilities depends largely on the existence of committed local leaders in the rural areas concerned as well as the extent to which government encourages local planning and participation. The wide variations in the scope and impact of self-help activities on the welfare of rural dwellers in different parts of the study areas, reflect the nature of community leadership and their inclination towards self-help programmes. This implies that in those areas where there are no effective self-help groups, rural development activities have not made much impact on the social welfare of the rural population.

Osimebi (2011) study revealed that self-help projects have tremendous impact on the development of the rural area especially in the area of provision of health facilities. In the same vein Ogunleye-Adetona and Oladeinde (2013) in their study on "The role of community self help projects in rural development of Kwara state, Nigeria", discovered that self-help projects normally influence the development of the rural communities thereby increasing their standard of living through the provision affordable and accessible healthcare. Bashir (2015) noted that most communities through self-help projects build community health centres in their locality. Agboola, Ifesanya and Akanmu (2012) found that community based organizations in Akinyele LGA between 1996 and 2006 have executed more of health centres and wells among others. Similarly, Ugwu (2013) found that self-help projects contribute to development of health and sanitation in their communities. He further noted that most communities in partnership with government have built health centres and provided boreholes/water to their communities.

#### **Theory**

##### **Basic Needs Approach**

This study is anchored on basic need approach. Basic needs approach is a development theory introduced by the International Labour Organization's World Employment Conference in 1976. The objective of basic need approach is to ensure that people's basic needs such as food, shelter, health, education, water and transport are met through the active participation of the people themselves. The basic needs approach to development was endorsed by governments and workers' and employers' organizations from all over the world. It influenced the programmes and policies of major multilateral and bilateral development agencies, and was the precursor to the human development approach.

Streeten (1977) puts forward the following description of the basic needs approach.

First, Basic Needs means the provision of people's minimum requirements for water, housing, clothing, food and sanitation. Second, Basic Needs may mean allowing people to define their own wants rather than what is stated by experts or professional bodies. Third, those who oppose the buyer's rationality model argue, instead, for government intervention in education, water and sanitation, and guidance in consumption. Fourth, basic needs can

also refer to the liberty of the people to express themselves through personal and group participation in planning and implementing projects

Basic Needs framework is an approach through which the indigenous people make use of the resources they have to fashion complex things that help to improve their general welfare. Ekejiuba (1983) adds that Basic Needs Approach stresses total local community mobilization and popular participation in identifying, defining, promoting, executing projects as well as in defining values and needs that are dictated by the existential conditions of the target group.

This approach gives momentum to localizing the rural development planning process so as to meet the exact requirements of the rural dwellers and create more effective feedback mechanisms through a process of mutual adaptation and innovation. Through this process of development from within, the rural people will become the beneficiaries of development. They will also be given a greater degree of control over the direction of change which is a pre-requisite for self-reliance.

### Findings

In summary, the findings of the study are:

Self help projects have helped in providing educational facilities to the inhabitants of Nnewi South local government area.

Self help projects plays significant role in infrastructural development in Nnewi South local government area.

Self help projects play significant role in the provision of health facilities in Nnewi South local government area.

### Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of self help projects on rural development in Nnewi South local government area. Data were generated from the inhabitants of the area and it was found that self help projects have helped in providing educational facilities to the inhabitants of Nnewi South local government area. The study also found that Self help projects plays significant role in infrastructural development in Nnewi South local government area. The study further found that self help projects plays significant role in the provision of health facilities in Nnewi South local government area.

Self-help project is an essential instrument for sustainable development of rural communities, especially in a developing country such as Nigeria. It is however, important to note that sustainable rural development in Nigeria is faced with numerous constraints and among which are inadequate financial funding, mismanagement of projects funds, dearth of technical aids for project execution, social political problems and inadequate government policies towards sustainable community development. It is assumed that a careful study and understanding and implementation of the recommendations will in no doubt bring in no small way about accelerated sustainable development and general improvement in the standard of living of the people in the study area. Based on the foregoing, the study concludes that self-help project have significant positive impact on rural development in Awka North local government area.

### Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

It is therefore recommended that efforts should be made by the various community based organizations involved in initiating self-help projects such as women group and town unions to embark on viable money fetching community projects that can generate funds for continued provision of self-help projects.

Government should provide periodic subvention to community based organizations involved in the provision of self-help projects to enable them have adequate fund for executing infrastructural development.

Government should also complement the effort of community based organization involved in the provision of self-help projects in the provision of scholarship to brilliant and indigent students of the community.

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