

# **ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are voluntary, non-profit, and highly localized institutions, with the objective of improving the socio-economic well-being of members. This study adopts a multi-stage sampling procedure, which combines purposive sampling and random sampling to select two local government areas of Igueben and Ikpoba-Okha of Edo State. The instrument of the study – structured questionnaire - is divided into two sections of A and B. They solicit responses on the socio-economic characteristics and medium of information/constraints respectively. It found that there is an unstable decrease in the trend of establishment of CBOs overtime, with membership mostly between 1 -100 people, who mostly engaged in agriculture. It also finds that membership contribution is the most source of finance, while their sources of information are mostly neighbours and festivals. The highest constraints facing the CBOs are embezzlement and corruption. All is not well to enable them play the role of alleviating poverty because of the monumental problems they face, especially as members dwell in the rural areas. It recommends that the government should step in many ways; as such interventions will mean much improvement.

**Keywords:** Socio-cultural, Characteristics, Neighbours, Festivals, Community, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are voluntary, non-profit, and highly localized institutions, with the objective of improving the socio-economic well-being of members (Abegunle, 2004; Loto, 2011). Adeyemo (2002) and Adejumobi (1991) note that the coming together of members creates conditions which broaden the base of self-governance and diffusion of power through a wider circle of population (Claudia, 2003; Nallari & Griffith, 2011). These are differences from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in scale and location since CBOs are mainly a neighbourhood gathering of mostly people with homogenous attributes. This is the major difference between CBOs and NGOs. CBOs are not as sophisticated and complex as NGOs in that members of CBOs have their different objectives which they carry to the organization and make them difficult to manage, while those of NGOs have collective organizational objectives which every member pursues.

Agbola (2002) gives poor government attention as reasons for the coming of CBOs since planning has long taken “top down” rather than “bottom-top” planning system (World Economic Forum for Africa - WEFA, 2014). This does not allow the supposed beneficiaries of project to be part of its inception, which weakens the confidence of the people. Given that nature of CBOs location in rural areas, agricultural types of CBOs are mostly prevalent in Edo State since agriculture is the major occupation of the people (WEFA, 2014). Ilori (1999) recommends the Community Action Programme for Poverty Alleviation (CAPPA) which was the result of the 1993 federal government study group. Thus efforts to alleviate poverty among these people should be focused on improving agriculture, which is the natural occupation of the people.

The study of Community Development Units CDU (2006) demonstrates that CBOs are good at creating network and relationship between local people, groups, private and voluntary organizations. However, this takes time and resource which may be difficult for the CBOs to find because these rural people have little source of information that can help them in the day to day running of these organizations. Since CBOs are non-profit making groups that work at local levels to improve life at the community level, the focus is to build equity across communities in all streams, among which is access to information (Dania and Igberaese, 2012). The local members should experience first-hand information on the needs within the neighbourhood. Besides being connected geographically, the only link between community members and their interest of desire and willingness to develop their skills and improve their livelihood is how well information is disseminated among the inhabitants of the community. CBOs are faced with challenges of sustainability partly because the responsibility to drive these projects is in the hands of staffs, trustees and volunteers. The objectives of the study are to examine the adequacy of the information source of the CBOs, and ascertain the constraints faced by them in carrying out their daily operations.

### **The Concept of Community Development**

Boreham (2004) opines that the word “community” is derived from the French and Latin words “communit” and “communitas”, which mean “with/together + gift”. It is an umbrella term that could be applied in many ways; refers to geographic location where inhabitants are based on region, unit of social organization such as workers and association, cultural groups that can be identified through religious race, and virtual group where members contact through electronic and other mass medium (Chen and Ravallion, 2004). There are also communities of circumstance emerging from disaster like flooding when affected people feel connected to one another, and communities of interest where identified group form to lobby government for some kind of policy change or sponsorship (Hagen, 2003; Adewole and Osabuohien, 2007). Centre for Africa Settlement Studies and Development (1992) sees community as nested; that means a community can contain a number of ethnic community.

Development, on the other hand, is an act of improvement, expansion, enlargement or refinement which is occasioned by growth. Dania and Igberaese (2012) assert that development is a consequence of growth. Chen and Ravallion (2004) added that development is an integrated, holistic process that meets people’s economic, social, political, culture and environment needs and improvement in the quality of life for all. The United Nations Development Programme sees development from a broader definition that implies poverty alleviation; it is a long run and healthy life, access to resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community (Loto, 2011).

Community development therefore is a broad term applied to civil leadership, activist involved and professionals to improve aspects of local community. Business Guide (2000) defined it as a set of values and practices, which play a special role in overcoming poverty. It

seeks to promote human development and is aimed at empowering communities and strengthening their capacities for self sustaining, as well as creating opportunities for the community to learn new skill by enabling people to act together. It focuses on mobilizing neighbourhood asset from inside out rather outside in (Chen and Ravallion, 2004). Loto, (2011) affirms that community development is often linked with work.

Igberaese (2004) suggests that Community development model that is more collaborative and comprehensive in nature and comprises of three components; leading through dialogue, collective empowerment and connective leadership. Hagen (2003) proposes a community development using participatory leadership, where community leaders need to involve members in the early stage of programme planning (Nurudeen and Usman 2010).

### **The Role of Community Based Organizations**

CBOs drive the purpose of government towards the people in terms of poverty alleviation and to improve the social and cultural conditions of the community. CBOs integrate the rural dwellers into the national life of the country and enable them to contribute fully to the gross domestic products and progress of the country. CBOs also provide avenue for the people to organize themselves for planning process; define their common and individual needs and challenges, solicit popular enthusiasm and public cooperation to execute the plan actions with maximum reliance on community resource and receive aid from the government and non-government organizations only when necessary (CDU,2006).

### **Relationships between CBOs and Poverty Alleviation Approaches**

Nyong (1999) was among the first to recognize various approaches or theories of poverty alleviation (Davis and Sanchez- Martinez, 2014). These are: economic growth, which focuses attention on rapid economic growth for price stability and employment through the harmonization of fiscal and monetary policies to achieve trickle down effects; the power game, which advocates a revolutionary consciousness of the subjected class to develop organizational capabilities to resist exploitation and overthrow the property system; the capital entrepreneurial, which kicks against the crude exploitation of workers through low wage and poor condition and calls for increase in wage and employment. Others are basic needs, which attempt to remedy the defect of economic growth by stress the later ability of growth to conquer material poverty; the corrupt theory, which recognizes that poverty and corruption are two way causation and thus advocates that efforts to alleviate poverty must first reduce corruption; the rural development approach, which suggests a simultaneous, holistic and inter-sectoral manipulation of policies variable to integrate the rural dwellers; the individual attribute, which sees the poor as the architect of their own problems and misfortunes. Since poverty is the result of motivation, attitude, the individual must take deliberate and vigorous efforts to raise his status and income level in the society (Igberaese, 2004; Raxana and Julena, 2012)

Igberaese (2004) sees nothing inherent in these theories that would lead to poverty alleviation since poverty is multi-dimensional. The author then advocates an internal order model to resolve the conflicts between the rich and the poor by transferring income from the rich segment to the poor segment of the society (Raxana and Julena, 2014)

Community Based Organizations can easily be seen to be related to the approaches above. CBOs are the vehicle or platform for the actualization of most of these approaches. CBOs are mostly located among the people at the grassroots who need mobilization to be receptive to any of such policies by the government. Their efforts lead to economic growth and thus increase the nation's gross domestic products. The CBOs are also involved in the

power game and thus raise the revolutionary consciousness of the people not only to resist exploitation but also to improve their attitudes to take deliberate and vigorous efforts to raise their status and income level in the society, individual attribute and the basic need approaches. CBOs also provide a ready-made assembly for lectures that would reduce corruption by relevant agencies, as a way of reducing poverty (WEFA, 2014).

### **Methodology of the Study**

Edo state is an inland state in the southern part of Nigeria. It occupies a land mass of 17,800km with a population of 3,218,334 people. It is a low land and rise above sea level, falling around the forest zone with tall trees and palm trees. It is also covered by the mangrove and fresh water swamp forest, which favours the production of cereal like maize, tuber crops like cassava, tree crops and fish farming. These make agriculture the natural occupation of the rural dwellers. The main occupations of the people therefore hove around farming, hunting, trading in mostly agricultural products, fishing, animal husbandry, especially poultry and piggery, palm wine tapping and bronze casting (Uwuamadi, 2010).

The study area has a population of 3,218,332 people, with a sample size of about 500 people from the rural local government with diverse characteristics. It adopted a multi-stage sampling procedure, which combines purposive sampling and random sampling. Purposive sampling was first used to select two local government areas of Igueben and Ikpoba-Okha on ease of collection of accurate data and need for the result to affect the immediate environment. In the second stage, a simple random sampling technique was used to select four (4) communities in each of the two local government areas amounting to eight (8) communities. The instrument of the study – structured questionnaire - is divided into two sections of A and B. They solicit responses on the socio-economic characteristics and medium of information/constraints respectively.

### **Measurement of Variables**

This surrounds the followings:

#### **1. Socio-economic Characteristics**

- a. Year of establishment: Respondents ticked the range of year of establishment of their CBOs from 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 21-25
- b. Membership strength: Respondents ticked the range of their membership strength from 1-100, 101-200.
- c. Source of funds: Respondents ticked their source(s) of fund from membership contribution, public funds and financial institutions

#### **2. Information Source(s) and Constraints**

- a. Source(s) of information: Respondents ticked from among the range of sources of information – television, radio, town criers, newspaper, internet, social gathering, neighbor, festival, telephone, poster, billboard, flyer and magazine.
- b. Constraints: Respondents ticked from among the range of constraints – leadership problem, poor funding support, lack of technical advice, inadequate training input, membership unwillingness to cooperation, manpower shortage, negative government policies, poor government support, conflict of interest, poor public acceptance, inadequate finance, embezzlement/ corruption, illiteracy, hostile terrain of operation, small structural, lack of effective planning, ineffective human resources management, lack of conflict resolution mechanism and improper needs assessment.

### **Analytical Techniques**

Analysis of data was done using simple descriptive statistics – frequency, percentage and mean, then hypotheses were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation

### **Presentation of Data and Discussion of Results**

**Table 1: Socio Economic Characteristics Respondents**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>
<b>Year of Establishment</b>				
1-5	10	10	10	10
6-10	29	29.0	29.0	39.0
11-15	15	15.0	15.0	54.0
16-20	25	25.0	25.0	79.0
21-25	21	21.0	21.0	79.0
<b>Membership Strength</b>				
1-100	79	79	79	79
101-200	21	21	21	100
Total	100	100	100	
<b>Activities</b>				
Agriculture	75	75	75	75
Infrastructure	9	9	9	84.0
Others	16	16	16	100
Total	100	100	100	100
<b>Source of finance</b>				
Membership	53	24.20	24.20	24.20
Contribution				
Public funds	5	2.28	2.28	26.48
NGOs	15	6.85	6.85	33.33
Financial Institution	21	22.80	22.80	56.13
Government	21	9.5	9.5	65.3
All of the above	75	34.25	34.25	100
<b>Use of Technical Advice</b>				
Ministry of Agriculture	4	4	4	4
Research Institute	22	22	22	26
ADB Only	49	49	49	75
All of the Above	9	9	9	84
Ministry of Agric ADP	16	16	16	100

**Source:** Field Survey data 2014

From table 1 above, 29% CBOs were established between 6-10 years ago. This fell to 15% for those established between 11-15 years and rose to 25% for between 16-20 years and then fell again to 21% for between 21-25 years. This indicates that there has been an unsteady decrease in the establishment of CBOs in the later year from 6 in the study areas.

The membership strength of these CBOs is mostly between 1-100 people as shown in the table to be 79%, which reflects the communal life of most rural dwellers. As expected, agriculture has the greatest percentage of 75 in the activities the CBOs are engaged in. The CBOs have various combinations of source of finance, out of which membership contribution is highest at 24.20%, which is closely followed by financial institutions at 22.80%. The others are government – 9.5%, NGOs – 6.86, and public funds 2.28%. They get technical advice

most from ADB only (49%), followed by research institution, ministry of agriculture/ADB and ministry of agriculture only, which are 22%, 16% and 4% respectively.

**Table 2: Information Services Available to Respondents**

	Frequency of Source		Adequacy of source	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Television	1.86	1.04	1.20	0.45
Radio	1.96	0.95	1.45	0.63
Town criers	1.80	1.04	1.40	0.53
Newspaper	1.14	0.40	1.18	0.56
Internet	1.47	0.85	1.20	0.51
Social gathering	2.22	1.19	1.40	0.68
Neighbours	2.76	0.98	2.06	0.83
Festivals	2.71	1.13	2.10	0.83
Telephone	2.25	1.18	1.61	0.82
Posters	1.57	0.81	1.61	0.82
Posters	1.57	0.81	1.61	0.82
Billboards	1.28	0.67	1,18	0.43
Flyers	1.75	0.95	1.20	0.60
Magazine	1.02	1.14	1.25	0.48

**Source:** Field Survey Data 2014

*\*frequently sourced (mean $\geq$ 2.00), adequate source (mean $\geq$ 2.00).*

Table 2 shows that CBOs in the study area frequently source information from neighbours (x = 2.76) and festivals (x = 2.71). The CBOs do not source information from the government through television, radio or newspaper and extension agents. This could be because the CBOs are small and the people mostly dwell in the rural areas without access to the other sources. It is not also surprising that the main and most effective medium of information in the villages – town criers - is not a source of information to the CBOs. This is because even the town crier themselves or the village heads who authorize the town criers have limited information on CBOs.

**Table 3: Characteristics Constraints of Respondents**

Constraints	Mean	SD
Leadership	2.73	1.16
Poor funding support	2.77	1.15
Lack of technical advice	2.24	0.89
Inadequate training input	2.19	0.93
Members unwillingness to cooperate	2.90	1.17
Manpower shortage	2.24	1.10
Negative government policies	2.80	1.18
Poor government support	2.84	1.18
Conflict of interest	2.42	1.08
Poor public acceptance	2.43	1.32
Inadequate finance	2.86	1.56
Embezzlement/corruption	3.00	1.25
Illiteracy	2.51	1.18

Hostile terrain of operation	1.66	1.09
Small structural arrangement	1.47	0.47
Lack of effective planning	2.44	0.99
Ineffective human resource management	2.47	1.18
Lack of conflict resolution mechanism	2.28	0.90
Improper needs assessment	2.39	0.95

**Source: Field Survey Data 2014**

*\*frequently sourced (mean≥2.00), adequate source (mean≥2.00)*

Table 3 shows the constraints faced by respondent CBOs. It shows that only hostile terrain of operation and small structural arrangement are not regarded as constraints. This is not surprising because the rural people know how to live together and there are established and effective ways of dealing with hostilities. The highest constraints are embezzlement and corruption, membership unwillingness, inadequate finance, poor government support, negative government policies, poor funding and leadership problem in that order at  $x = 3.00$ ,  $x = 2.90$ ,  $x = 2.86$ ,  $x = 2.84$ ,  $x = 2.80$ ,  $x = 2.77$  and  $x = 2.73$  respectively. It is worth noting that illiteracy constraint is not as serious as those listed above. It implies that against the belief that illiteracy is the key problem in community development, there is a level of native intelligence usually deployed by the local people.

**Table 4: Relationship Between Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents and the Role They Play in the Community**

	Years of establishment		Membership strength		Technical advice		Capital base	
Roles played in various areas	Coefficient (r)	Prob. Level	Coefficient (r)	Prob. Level	Coefficient (r)	Prob. Level	Coefficient (r)	Prob. Level
Agriculture	0.098	0.32	0.252*	0.011	0.315**	0.001	-0.196	0.05
Micro-credit soft loans	-0.173	0.085	0.188	0.060	0.369**	0.000	0.319**	0.001
Increasing literacy level	0.456**	0.000	-0.278**	0.005	-0.313**	0.002	0.409**	0.000
Health services	-0.622**	0.000	-0.453	0.00	-0.296**	0.003	-0.240**	0.016
Family support	-0.766**	0.000	-0.473	0.000	-0.05	0.624	-0.444**	0.000
Environmental awareness	0.196**	0.050	-0.378**	0.000	0.186	0.64	-0.503	0.000
Home Economics	0.093	0.355	-0.382**	0.000	0.0009	0.929	0.199*	0.047
Protecting vulnerable groups	0.093	0.355	0.034	0.738	-0.153	0.128	0.368*	0.000

**Source: Field Survey Data 2014**

**\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)**

**\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)**

Table 4 is the result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation test between socio-economic characteristics and the role the CBOs play in the community. It shows that increase in literacy rate is positively related with length of establishment at 5% level, but negatively related with membership strength of the CBOs. CBOs with long years of establishment create more opportunities for education in the communities, but the more it grows in membership, the lesser opportunity for education, which can be due to disharmony and disagreement occasioned by new comers who may not understand the initial objectives of

the CBOs. Others that are positively related to years of establishment are environmental awareness home economics and protection of the vulnerable group. Those negatively related are micro-credit soft loan, as members may not pay back with time; health service, as no community medical practitioners interact with them overtime; and family support as members of CBOs with time. However, the most surprising result is the increase in literacy level which is negatively related with technical advice. This is shocking because of the response to extension worker and the advice these CBOs get from ADB / and the Ministry of Agriculture. This means that the educational methods are not effective, perhaps because the educators have not learned to come down to the level of these rural dwellers.

**Table 5: Relationship between Socio-Economic Characteristics and the Constraints they Face**

	<b>Year of establishment</b>		<b>Member-ship strength</b>		<b>Technical advice</b>		<b>Capital base</b>	
	Coefficient (r)	Prob. Level	Coefficient (r)	Prob. Level	Coefficient (r)	Prob. Level	Coefficient (r)	Prob. Level
Leadership problem	0.295**	0.003	0.345**	0.000	0.082	0.417	-0.194	0.053
Poor funding support	-0.203*	0.042	0.424**	0.000	0.23*	0.026	-0.305**	0.002
Lack of technical advice	-0.011	0.911	0.582**	0.000	0.472**	0.000	-0.182	0.071
Inadequate training input	-0.003	0.973	0.558*	0.000	0.202*	0.000	-0.182	0.071
Members unwillingness to cooperate	-0.372**	0.000	0.235*	0.019	-0.006	0.044	-0.428	0.000
Manpower shortage	-0.188	0.060	0.233*	0.026	0.061	0.953	-0.256	0.008
Negative government policies	-0.247*	0.013	0.401**	0.000	0.231*	0.546	-0.265**	0.000
Poor public acceptance	-0.259**	0.009	0.343**	0.000	0.216*	0.034	-0.356**	0.023
Inadequate finance	-0.252*	0.012	0.326**	0.001	0.353**	0.031	-0.288**	0.723
Embezzlement/ corruption	-0.396**	0.000	0.336**	0.001	0.036	0.721	-0.328**	0.001
Illiteracy	-0.828**	0.000	-0.099	0.328	0.009	0.928	-0.539**	0.000

**Source:** Field Survey Data 2014

**\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)**

**\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)**

Table 5 shows that embezzlement and corruption are negatively related to years of establishment and capital base. Hence, the older the CBOs and the more their money and asset, the lesser the main issue many scholars have attributed Nigeria underdevelopment to – embezzlement and corruption. However, it is positively related with membership strength – the more people join, the more they dig for the soul of these CBOs. Again and surprisingly, embezzlement and corruption are positive with technical advice, which tell volume of the kinds of negative advice the CBOs get. Indeed, it is only leadership that is positive with year of establishment. This indicates that with time, most of the constraints would be overcome.

### **Summary of Findings**

The study assesses the socio-economic characteristics of CBOs in Edo state and found that there is an unstable decrease in the trend of establishment of CBOs overtime. Membership is mostly between 1 -100 people, who mostly engaged in agriculture. It also found that membership contribution is the most source of finance, while ADB remains the CBOs source of technical advice. Also, their sources of information are mostly neighbours and festivals. The highest constraints facing the CBOs are embezzlement and corruption. The long the year of establishment, the less this constraint becomes, but the more it becomes with increase in membership strength. Others are: members' unwillingness to participate, inadequate finance, poor government support and policies, poor funding, and leadership problem. Hostile terrain is not found to be a problem. The more the years of establishment, the more the literacy rate, but the more the increase in membership, the lesser members become educated. Most surprisingly, literacy rate is negatively related to technical advice. The only contrite which is positively related with years of establishment is leadership.

### **Conclusion**

All is not well in the socio-economic characteristics of CBOs in Edo State - with respect to the roles these CBOs play, their sources of information and their constraints - to enable them play the role of alleviating poverty because of the monumental problems they face, especially as members dwell in the rural areas. Government interventions will mean much improvement.

### **Recommendations**

Given the unstable decrease of CBOs overtime, the various agencies should intensify mobilization of the rural people to ensure a steady increase in CBO, with agricultural extension agents serving them as technical advisers to easily overcome their constraints, rather than relying on ADB, which is mostly far from them. This is because they are mostly involved in agriculture. Government should also help these CBOs in the area of finances because as poor people, members' contribution cannot carry them through. Also, the information sources of the CBOs should be improved upon. To this end, there should be occasional village square lectures by the extension agents, advertisements on radios in local languages, which even the villagers can assess and so on. Since the highest constraints facing the CBOs are embezzlement and corruption, government can employ local auditors to administer their finances, especially when government starts helping them with finance, but the more it becomes with increase in membership strength.

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