

Town Unions and Provision of Electricity in Rural Communities in Ebonyi State: A Focus on Selected Communities

Humphrey N. Nwobashi, PhD and Anthony Itumo, PhD

Department of Political Science Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

Ebonyi State University, P.M.B 053, Abakaliki

Corresponding Author: Humphrey N. Nwobashi

Abstract: This study interrogates the role and the challenges facing the town unions in the provision of electricity in rural communities in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. The study was carried out in twelve selected rural communities selected in the three senatorial zones of the state. The study was informed by the need to bridge gap occasioned by the pauper of extant literature in this area of study. The data for the study were gathered through the use of questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), observation and documentary methods. The data were analyzed using simple percent, contingency tables, and histogram while chi square was used for the test of hypotheses. The study adopted community action theory as its framework of analysis. The findings revealed that the town unions in have contributed have not contributed significantly to the provision of electricity in rural communities in Ebonyi State. The study equally revealed that partisanship, lack of enlightenment, illiteracy, and poverty among the rural dwellers poses challenge to the contributions of town unions in the provision of electricity in rural communities in the state. The study recommended among others for regular provision of subventions by the government to town unions to ensure adequate funding of electricity projects in rural communities. It equally recommended for adequate trainings and enlightenment of town union leaders to reposition them to contribute better in the provision of electricity in rural communities in the state.

Keywords: Town unions, Provision, Electricity, Rural Communities and Ebonyi State

Date of Submission: 21-02-2019

Date of acceptance: 08-03-2019

I. INTRODUCTION

The greatest challenge retarding socio-economic development in many rural communities in Nigeria is the absence of electricity. This has become an issue of concern to stakeholders in development programmes in Nigeria considering the centrality of energy in driving development in modern world. Unarguably, without electricity achieving universal access to energy for inclusive growth will be a mirage. It is in the acknowledgement of this gospel truth that Eke (2014) has asserted that about half of the estimated 150 million people in Nigeria live in the rural areas characterized by high rural-urban migration rate, unemployment rate, and low per capita income. He furthered submitted that the provision of electricity in rural areas will catalyze the growth of cottage industries especially agro-allied industries which will help to curb rural urban migration. In this view, the availability of reliable energy is not only a panacea for rural development but a prerequisite for promotion and sustenance of healthy national economic growth and development and absence of it constrains overall development. The resultant effect is rural-urban migration with its attendant socio-economic consequences on the society.

Since many Nigerian dwell in the rural areas, to provide electricity at the rural area to ensure inclusive development and avoid the negative consequences that may arise as a result of the opposite. In order to optimally develop and efficiently harness and manage the available resources and improve on the quality of lives of the rural people and given that development is technologically driven, there is dire need to provide electricity in the rural areas. A part from being the pillar of wealth creation in the modern economy, it is also the nucleus of operation engine of economic growth and development. The above assertion aptly explains why electricity absence has remained one of the most frustrating and disturbing issue in economic development of Nigeria.

To overcome this challenge, Nigeria government over the years has initiated programmes ensure adequate availability of electricity in rural areas. One of such programmes is the Rural Electricity Programme (REP) put in place in 1981. Its strategy has been to extend national grid to provide electricity at the rural areas, especially at the local government headquarters across the country. Although this programme has resulted in increased access to electricity to local government headquarters and their immediate vicinity, many rural households are yet access electricity at the rural level. Statistics has revealed that less than 20% of the rural

households in Nigeria have access to electricity. As a result, many of the inhabitants of the rural communities today still rely on woods and other expensive, unhealthy and unsustainable sources for energy. The failure of this effort has been attributed to non-involvement of the people at the grass root in the formulation and implementation of the programme by the government.

It is against this backdrop that the town unions have stepped in to provide electricity in many rural communities in Nigeria. Despite the contributions made by town in the provision electricity has been understudied especially in Ebonyi State. It to bridge this identified gap that this study has become highly imperative. To address the problem, the researchers raised the following questions: (1) what are contributions made by the town unions in the provision of electricity in rural communities of Ebonyi State? (2) What are the challenges militating against the efforts of the town unions in the provision of electricity in rural communities in Ebonyi State?

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Town Unions and Rural Development

The contributions of the town unions to the development of rural areas have been duly acknowledged by many development scholars. In this regard, Adebayo (1995) has remarked that the town unions have made significant impact in the physical environment of Nigerian rural settlements and at the same time improved the socio-economic well-being of the rural inhabitants. In similar vein, Egunjobi (1984) asserted that rural communities engaged in self-help development strategy through the efforts of town unions to improve water supply in rural communities. This was equally supported by Oyeyemi (1995), who remarked that town unions in rural communities were involved in the following development programmes: rehabilitation of roads, constructions of market and shop, digging of deep wells, construction of classrooms and organization of adult education programmes. Agbola (1996) reported that town unions in Ekiti West LGA undertook the following development projects: construction of club houses, building of drainages, donation of books and trophies to schools among others. The foregoing are just few cases of the notable contributions of town unions in Nigerian rural communities.

It against this backdrop that many scholars have argued that the activities of CBOs are vital to the socio-economic development of rural communities (Oludimu, 1990; Olowu *et al.*, 1991; Adejumobi, 1991; Olomola, 2001; Abegunde, 2004; Abegunde, 2009). Olomola (2001) in furtherance of this assertion Olomola (2001) explained that the town unions in Lagos in 1998 constructed primary school block, community bank, court hall, community hall, post office and opened up several rural roads for transportation of goods and personnel (Olomola, 2001). He maintained that it was on this ground that Lagos state won the best town union award in 1998. Adding to this exploration, Abegunde (2004) revealed that in Atiba Local Government area of Osun State about 160 town unions in the area provided rural infrastructures worth over 17.56 million naira to their various communities.

In the same vein, Adejumobi (1991) reported that in Enugu state, the town unions' economic resilient provided them the impetus to constructed network of roads within their domains, established schools and health centres, provided potable water and took care of the wellbeing of their members without government intervention. It was also observed that the state-of-art maternity centre constructed by town unions in Udi local government area of the state received no government assistance. The situation of town unions in Kano State is markedly different. The state government helped them to provide fund for them when performing their tasks to their communities (Adejumobi, 1991). Their challenges were that of conflict of interests, high illiteracy level and low and poor public acceptance.

Town unions in the opinion of Krishna (2004), serves as a veritable tool for easy dissemination of information and enhanced access of citizens to public decision making. Town unions bring insights and awareness as well as access...that government agencies simply cannot match. Local knowledge allows town unions to pinpoint where government aid could help, rather than simply distributing subsidies to whomever can yell the loudest (Rubin, 2000). Town unions promote good governance at the grassroots level by engaging the citizens and the local government in two-ways information flows (Korten, 1990; Alkire *et al.* 2000). Improved communication and trust can be achieved through effective dissemination of information over extended lengths of time. When interactions are constantly repeated, they create webs of sustained interdependence between local government and town unions (Forrest, 2000). Citizens are more mobilized and act more collectively when they get involved in these networks.

The capacity of citizens to mobilize is achieved when town unions work continually over time and are able to develop trust among each other (Fiszbein, 1997). Community associations are likely to involves standards that guide – “repertoires of collective action” their operations if they have existed for some times have been around for some time (Tarrow, 1994), so that there can be enabled to handle issues of diverse interest so as to provide clear and fair rules that make them to interact better with their constituents (Ostrom, 1990). Indigenous associations are needful and therefore take before setting-up new association.

It is also on record that some rural communities in South-Western Nigeria through self-organized arrangements, mutual agreement is and shared understanding, planned and executed public goods and services that directly touched on the lives of their people at the cost of 26,204,000.00. Oriokuta community spent N70,000.00 on road maintenance in 1995, Famia community contributed for the Famia-Modakeke road project and Elerole community spent N50,000.00 in 1995 for their road construction. In the area of the construction of culverts, Aponmode, Isale-Amero and Alabata communities in Akinyele local government area spent N1.4 million on construction of culverts between 1996 and 2000. Igbope community in Oorelope local government spent N85,000.00 to open new roads at the outskirts of the community Ara Joshua community in Ife South Local Government Area also resorted to self-help efforts for road maintenance (Akinola, 2000:7).

In the area of health facilities, nine health clinics were provided in Ife region but the clinics suffered from lack of staff and inadequate drugs supply. In the same manner, Alabata, Ile-ogbo and Igbope communities contributed £250,000.00, 410,000.00 and N2.5 million to building of maternity centre in 1983-1987, 1992 and 2000 respectively (Akinola, 2007). Educational sector was not left out by these communities. Emure community spent N1.8 million for the building of a model secondary school from 2001-2005. The people of Iwo-Ate in Ogo-Oluwa Local Government constructed a block of six classrooms with a staff room and one workshop in 1985. Aseri and Akarakum communities in Badagry local government area renovated a primary school at the cost of N300,000.00 in 1995, Igare community disbursed money to students in various tertiary institutions as bursary awards at 1410,000.00 per student. All the communities in Ife region spent N190,000.00 for provision of electricity in 1995.

In the North-Central Zone of Nigeria, town unions in Benue State were not left out. For instance, Shangev-Ya Development Association in Kwande Local Government Area established Shangev-Ya Community Secondary School which facilitated capacity building and skill acquisition. The same association established a Health care centre for improvement of health status of the community members. It further procured two milling machines and rehabilitated 23 kilometres of road as well as eight culverts. It also had small scale loan scheme (Akpehe, 2006).

Gbatse Youth Association in Vandeikya Local Government in Benue State is credited for her recorded achievement. In 1992, it rehabilitated a 37 kilometre road, constructed local bridges across the L'gingu, uavande and Ukyaaagu streams, constructed a public well in Ahilejime market area and formed a vigilante group for community policing and dispute settling (Akpehe, 2006).

In South-South Zone of Nigeria, a similar thing happened in Bayelsa State in 2006. Fourteen communities within Kolo Creek Local Government Area founded a foundation known as Kolo Creek Foundation. Some communities participating in the foundation mobilized themselves to undertake significant self-help projects. For instance, Amorokeni community built toilets, Kolo one, two and three communities came together and built a weekly market to enhance commercial activities in their area and Yiba-Ama community rewired the electricity project in their area (Ebeleke, 2007).

In South Eastern zone, Ihiagwa community based organization in Imo State communally established a maternity home, a postal agency, a Baptist Secondary School and a residential building for the Catholic Mission. It offered scholarship to its deserving children. One of the students who enjoyed scholarship (Dr. Kennedy Okeke) founded an NGO in 1991 known as Horizon International Medical Mission (HIMM) in USA. This organization came to Nigeria in 2000 on its medical mission to provide medical support to the less fortunate people (World Bank, 1996).

A community based organization known as Fanners Development Union (FADU) was established in 1989 as organization of low-income rural and sub-urban peasants in Nigeria. FADU operates a credit and savings scheme, provides training to beneficiaries in areas of equipment maintenance, marketing, enterprises, environmental preservation dissemination of new and appropriate technologies and supply of inputs to farmers on credit at subsidized rate. It engage in socio-economic transformation of rural areas by operating community targeted programmes in the areas of health, environment, adult literacy and water supply (Adedaja, 1996).

Cases of town unions performances in Nigeria abound but their achievements have not been able to transform the rural areas significantly because they are bedeviled with problems of funding, mismanagement of their resources, illiteracy, cultural beliefs, politicization and corrupt leaders etc (Famoriyo, 1995; Akinsorotan and Olujide, 2007; Adedaja, 1996; and Akpehe, 2006).

Empirical Review on Town Unions and Provision of Rural Electricity Projects

A study of the contributions of town to community development in Lagos State was carried out by Akinsorotan and Olujide (2006). They discovered that town unions supplied labour and contributed money to execute their felt-needs projects with little or no interference from external bodies. Their projects empowered the beneficiaries to break the cycle of poverty. Some of the executed projects were provision

of healthcares (health centers, maternity homes and dispensaries), markets, motorable roads, primary and post-primary schools, post offices, rural electrification and portable water.

Ogunleye-Adetona & Oladeinde (2013) examined the role of town unions in rural development in Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives were to: identify the various on-going and completed self help projects in the study area; identify the sources of funding of these self help projects; examine the roles of rural community associations in self help projects in the area; assess the level and role of the government for self help projects in rural development; and highlight the spatial patterns of projects being undertaken. The used both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data were collected with the aid of questionnaire administered to the 400 sampled respondents. The data collected were analyzed using bi-variate analyses such as percentage, cross tabulation, regression/ correlation, chi-square and nearest neighbour analyses. The findings among other revealed that community town unions/associations had established about 15 percent of rural electricity project in the area. Hence, they conclude that community unions/associations contributed immensely to the execution of self help projects, which subsequently engender rural development. Notwithstanding these laudable findings, the study failed to establish how the respondents were sampled. Even though this study examined town unions' contributions to the development of rural electricity project, it is too general and focused on the examination of so many variables. Again, the methodology is too complex and cannot generate reliable and precise scientific measurement that could produce reliable results.

Yadoo & Cruickshank (2010) critically reviewed the value of cooperatives in rural electrification. Specifically, they reviewed the experiences of various rural electrification delivery models that have been established in developing countries, including concessionary models, dealership approaches and the strengthening of small and medium-sized energy businesses; and drew examples from Bangladesh and Nepal, together with a detailed case study of a Nepali rural electric cooperative, to explore the role that local cooperatives can play in extending electricity access. They argued that in spite of the substantial reforms in electricity sectors of many developing countries across the decades, which were driven by global agendas of privatization and liberalization, there were little or no market incentives for profit-seeking private companies to participate in rural electrification. They further maintained that the delivery models for rural electrification needed to change.

They found that although there is no magic bullet solution to deliver rural electrification, if offered appropriate financial and institutional support, socially orientated cooperative businesses can be a willing, efficient and effective means of extending and managing rural electricity services. The problem with study is that it is concerned with how cooperative society can contribute to development of electricity projects in rural communities rather than how town unions contribute to development of electricity projects which is the focus of this study. As such the findings of these projects cannot extrapolate to the explanation of study since cooperative society is more of private owned body rather public owned organization. Again, the cooperative society in Ebonyi State is centered on commodities marketing and as avenue for accessing credit and farm inputs as such cannot undertake capital intensive projects like electricity generation, transmission and distribution hence the need for this study.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher adopts "community action theoretical model" as its framework of analysis. The community action theoretical model was propounded by Freire in 1973. The theory emphasizes the need for communities to collectively strengthen their capacity to develop through education of their residents (Kulig, 2000). Implicit in this theory is that residents in poor communities can team together to attain socio economic development (Boreham, 2004) through education. This means that community action model involves participatory action approaches and is asset based. That is to say that it builds on the strengths of a community to create changes from within (Racher, 2007). Its intention is to change by building community capacity, working in collaboration with communities and providing a framework for residents to acquire skills and resources necessary for assessing their socio economic conditions (Lavery, 2005). When they have done this, they can plan, implement and evaluate actions designed to improve those conditions.

This means that the model is designed to increase the capacity of communities and organisations in addressing their socio-economic determinants that will positively influence development in their rural communities (Anderson & McFarlane, 2004). The relevance of this theory to this study is hinged on the fact that it can help us to explain the contributions of town development unions in the funding of basic education and health facilities in rural communities in Ebonyi state. From the above theoretical proposition it is axiomatic to draw the following hypothesis: *Democratic governance has increased the contributions of town unions in the provision of basic education in rural communities in Ebonyi State.*

IV. METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study is cross-sectional survey design. This study was carried out in twelve selected communities from the six Local Government Areas chosen from the three senatorial zones. These communities comprised Amagu and Enyibichiri communities in Ikwo LGA and Umuezeokoha and Eka communities in Ezza North Local Government Area located in Ebonyi Central Senatorial District. Others are: Igbeagu and Ezza-Inyimagu communalities in Izzi LGA, Umuogodo Akpu and Umuezeaka communities in Ohaukwu LGA in Ebonyi North Senatorial District while in Ebonyi South Senatorial District, Ugwulangwu and Okposi Ukwu communities in Ohaozara LGA and Owutu Edda and Nguzu Edda communities in Afikpo South LGA.

A population of four hundred and twenty two thousand four hundred and forty two (422,442) participated in the study. The participants were selected from religious leaders, women leaders, public office holders/civil servants, youths/students, community/town union leaders past and present from the selected communities. It is imperative to note that the study employed multistage sampling procedure.

The data for study were sourced through the use of questionnaire instruments, observation, and focus group discussions, while the other set of data were obtained from the internet, text books, journals, newspapers, and magazines. The statistics instrument used for the analysis and presentation of data were simple percentage frequency tables and histogram while chi-square was used for the test of hypothesis

V. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section deals with the analysis and presentation of the sampled respondents' views on the major theme of the subject under study. The data were generated in line with the research questions and results presented in figures 1-5

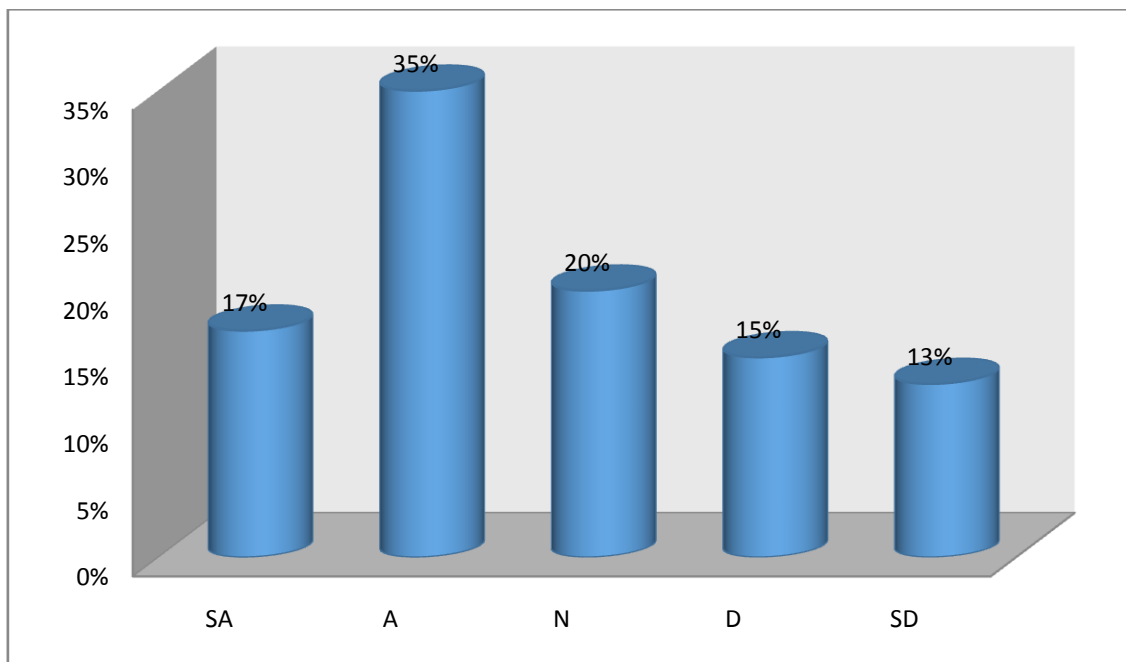


Figure 1: Histogram on how partisan interests have affected the efforts of town unions to mobilize the community members for the purchase of transformers

Source: Humphrey Nwobashi and Itumo's Field survey, 2016

The result in figure 1 indicates that 17% representing 247 of the sampled respondents strongly agreed, 35% accounting for 508 of them agreed, 20% representing 290 of them were neutral, 15% accounting for 218 respondents disagreed and 13% representing 188 of them strongly disagreed on questionnaire item 16. This indicated that the sampled respondents accepted that partisan interests have affected the efforts of town unions to mobilize the community members to purchase transformers to boost rural electrification in rural communities in Ebonyi State.

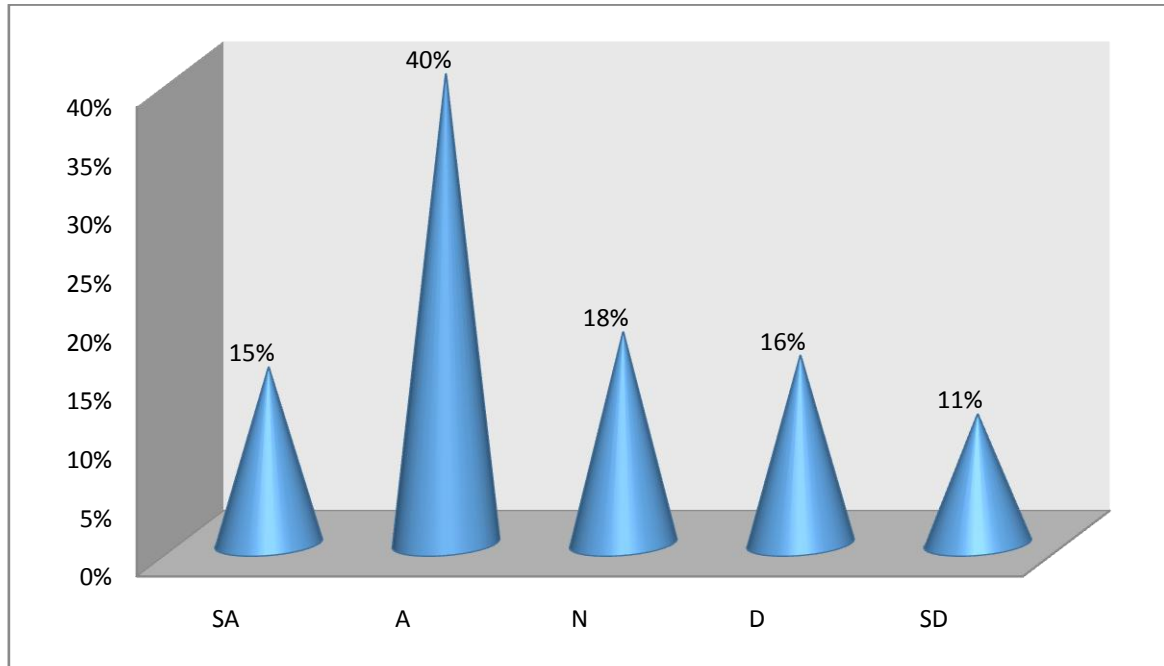


Figure 2: Histogram on how clientele patronage has hindered the efforts of town unions in motivation of community members to provide funds for the execution of electricity project
Source: Humphrey Nwobashi and Itumo's Field survey, 2016

Figure 2 shows that 15.0% accounting for 218 of the respondents indicated strongly agreed, 40.0% representing 580 of them agreed, 18.0% accounting for 261 of them indicated neutral, 16.0% accounting for 232 of them disagreed and 11.0% representing 160 of them strongly disagreed on questionnaire item 2. This implied that the sampled respondents are of the opinion that clientel patronage has hindered the efforts of town unions in motivation of community members to provide funds for the execution of electricity project in rural communities of Ebonyi State.

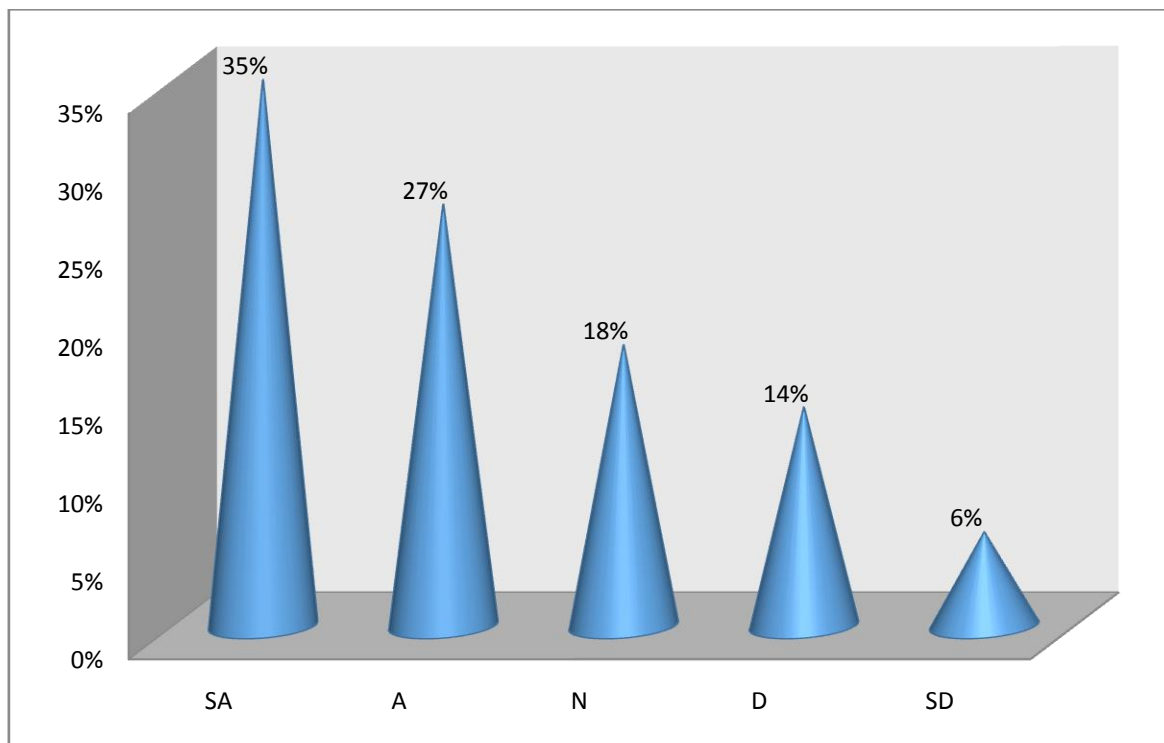


Figure 3: Histogram on how beneficiary interests determine the villages that benefit from electricity projects
Source: Humphrey Nwobashi and Itumo's Field survey, 2016

The data in figure 3 indicates that 35.0% representing 508 of the respondents strongly agreed, 27.0% accounting for 392 of them agreed, 18.0% representing 261 of them were neutral, 14.0% accounting for 203 of them disagreed and 6.0% accounting for 87 of them strongly disagreed on questionnaire 3. This means that the beneficiary interests do determine the villages that benefit from electricity projects in rural community of Ebonyi State.

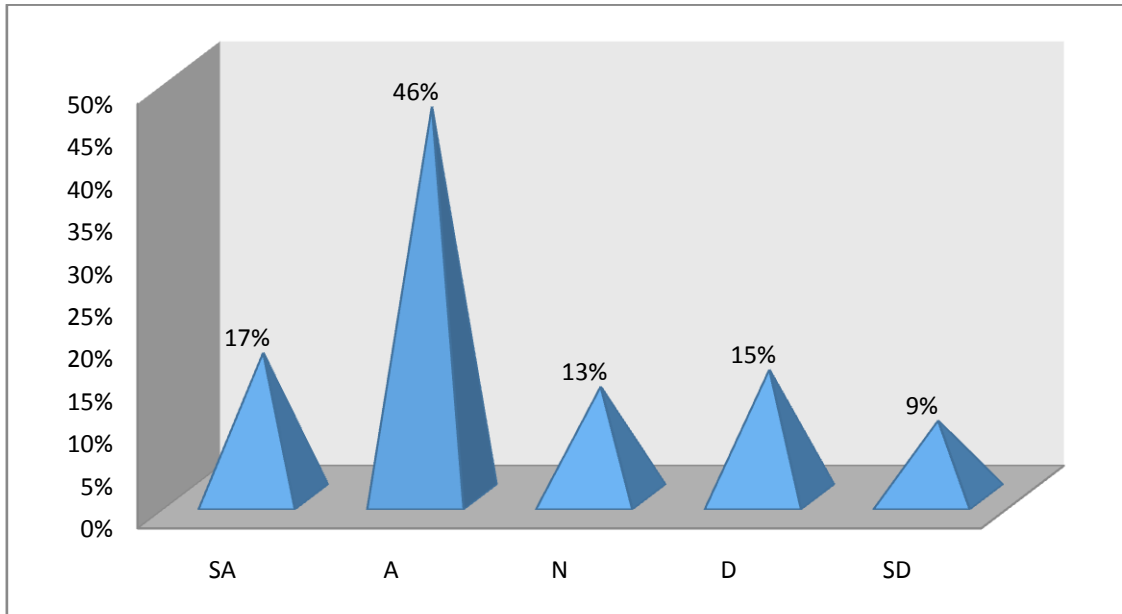


Figure 4: Histogram on how political differences have influenced the appointment of members of electricity projects committees.

Source: Humphrey Nwobashi and Itumo's Field survey, 2016

The distribution of the respondents' responses to questionnaire item 4 as presented in figure 20 shows that 17.0% accounting for 247 of them strongly agreed, 46.0% representing 667 agreed, 13.0% accounting for 189 were neutral, 15.0% accounting for 218 of them disagreed and 9.0% representing 130 strongly disagreed on this questionnaire item. Going by this analysis, it is obvious that the respondents accepted that political differences have influenced the appointment of members of electricity projects committees in rural communities of Ebonyi State.

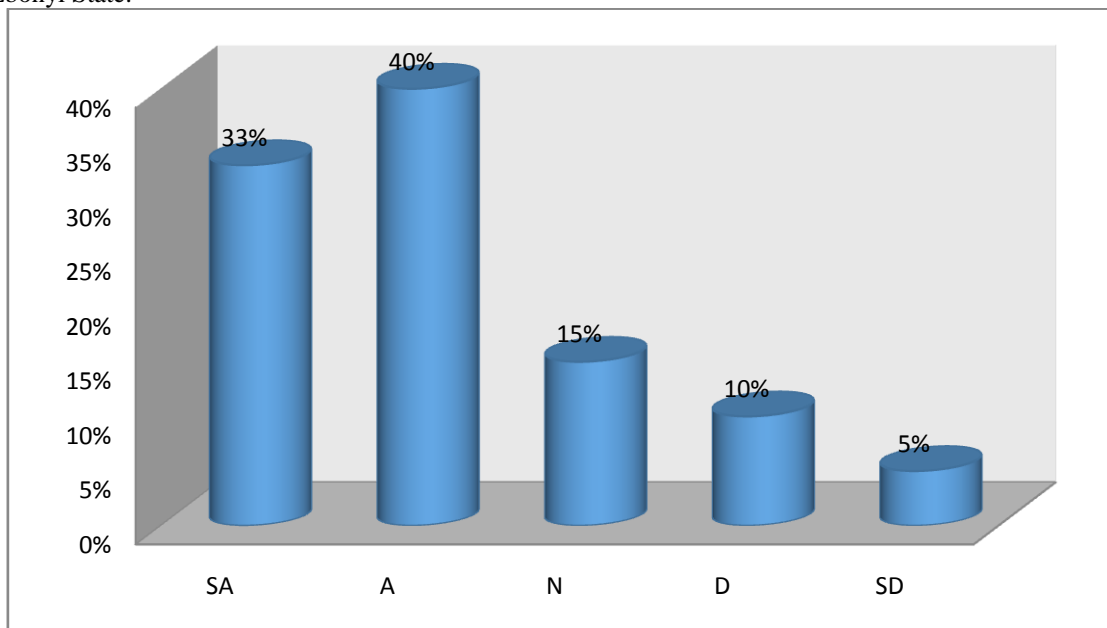


Figure 5: Histogram on how political intolerance influences town unions' executive in determining the amount electricity consumers pay as electricity bills

Source: Humphrey Nwobashi's Field survey, 2016

The result in figure 5 shows the distribution of the sampled respondents on questionnaire item 5. The obtained responses were as follows: strongly agreed 33% representing 479 respondents, agreed 40% accounting for 580 respondents, neutral 15% representing 218, disagreed 10% accounting for 145 respondents and strongly disagreed 5% representing 73 respondents. Based on these responses, it was accepted that political intolerance does influence town unions' executive in determining the amount electricity consumers pay as electricity bills in rural communities of Ebonyi State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: The hypothesis tested here is stated as follows:

H_{A1}: Hypothesis: Town unions have contributed significantly to the provision of electricity in rural communities in Ebonyi State.

Data collected on variables were subjected to chi-square test of independence at an alpha level of 0.05. Summary of the test is presented in Table 14.

Decision Rule

Reject the null hypothesis (H₀) and accept the alternate hypothesis (H_a), if the P-Value is less than 0.05.

Table 1: Chi-Square Test of Independence on Town Unions' Contributions to the Provision of Electricity Projects in Rural Communities in Ebonyi State

S/N	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
1	247 174.4	508 420.6	290 243.8	218 328	188 284.2	1451
2	218 174.4	580 420.6	261 243.8	232 328	160 284.2	1451
3	87 174.4	203 420.6	261 243.8	392 328	508 284.2	1451
4	247 174.4	667 420.6	189 243.8	218 328	130 284.2	1451
5	73 174.4	145 420.6	218 243.8	580 328	435 284.2	1451
Total	872	2103	1219	1640	1421	7,255

Source: Field Survey Data, 2016

Chi-Square = 137.15

X²-cal = 137.15

DF = 16, P-Value = 0.05

X²-tab = 163.47

Decision: Reject alternative hypothesis and null hypothesis

The data analysis in Table 1 shows that the Chi-square calculated value (X²-cal = 137.15) is greater than the critical value (X²-cal = 163.47) at 0.05% level of confidence interval. Based on the decision rule, we reject the alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis that town unions have not contributed significantly to the provision of electricity projects in rural communities in Ebonyi State.

VI. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The results of the analysis of data indicate that town unions in Ebonyi State have not made significant contributions towards the provision of electricity in rural communities. Both the questionnaire, FGD and observation data gather in the twelve communities surveyed in Ebonyi State lends support to the fact that town unions in rural communities have not contributed significantly to the provision of electrification projects due to the prevalence of partisan interests, clientele patronage, selfish interests, political differences and unnecessary political intolerance inherent in the administration of town unions in Ebonyi State. These factors pose serious challenges to the provision of rural electrification projects in Ebonyi State.

The results are contrary to the findings of similar study such as Ogunleye-Adetona and Oladeinde (2013). In this study the researchers examined the role of town unions in self help projects in the area of electricity in rural development in Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings among other revealed that town unions have established about 15 percent of rural electricity projects in the area. Hence, they conclude that town unions have contributed immensely to the execution of self help projects, which subsequently engender rural development in area of electricity. The socio-cultural context of the studies accounts for the disparities in their outcomes as Kwara State has more centralized administrative system compared to the egalitarian nature of the Igbo society where Ebonyi State is located. While in Kwara State town union enjoy stronger solidarity but in Ebonyi State the revise is the case as partisan issues are allowed to rare its ugly head even administrations of

town unions. This development and other factor combined to limit the efforts the town in the provision of electricity in rural communities in the state.

The influence of party politics constitutes a major hindrance to the provision of electricity projects in some rural communities in Ebonyi State by the town unions. There is always some interference from the politicians on the composition of town union executives. The politicians especially those from the ruling party overtly or covertly manipulate the activities and functions of town union executives. They achieve this through direct dissolution of the executives of town unions and replacing them with party loyalists who most times lack the popular support required to galvanize members of the communities for meaningful electricity projects.

Sometimes, they influence the sites and parts of the community that would benefit from electricity projects. In most cases, some parts of the community perceived to support the opposition parties are not allowed to benefit from the rural electricity projects. These discriminatory practices pose challenges to the provision of the electricity projects by the town unions in some rural communities in Ebonyi State. This invariably affects the efforts of the town unions to mobilize the community members for the purchase of transformers and cables needed for the provision of rural electricity in the communities.

Besides, the mobilization of the community for the provision of electricity projects is always hindered as people who do not benefit from the projects do refuse to contribute their quota to the projects. As such the funds needed to execute the electricity project suffer setbacks. Again, the appointment of electricity committees is highly influenced by party affiliations. Memberships of the electricity committees are determined by party affiliations as only party loyalists are appointed as members.

This invariably affects the parts of the community that benefits from the electricity projects and as such the even distributions of the projects were grossly affected as politicians were bent on providing electricity only to their party supporters' villages. This automatically affects the overall development of the entire community. Even in the determination of the amount to be paid by electricity consumers, the town unions do give indiscriminate bill in favour of those who are their party supporters and the result is that the payment of electricity bill suffers serious setback in the rural communities. This explains the reason why most of the rural communities in Ebonyi State stay for some months without supply of electricity because the electricity company had to cut off their electric cable to compel them to pay their bills. This situation coupled with over estimated bills has in some cases led to clashes between the Electricity Distribution Company and the youths in rural communities of State. This assertion was supported by a telephone conversation between the researchers and Honorable Commissioner for Power in Ebonyi State, Chief Emmanuel Uguru on 11th October, 2016, who stated that there have been several clashes between youths in some communities and Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC).

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed that the town unions in Ebonyi State of Nigeria have not contributed significantly in the provision of electricity in rural communities in Ebonyi State. This was due to the prevalence of partisan interests, clientele patronage, beneficiary interests, political differences and political intolerance among town union executives in running the affairs of the rural communities in the State.

Other factors that impede the contributions of town unions in the provision of electricity in rural communities in Ebonyi State, are lack of funds, resulting from high prevalence of poverty in many rural communities and illiteracy that pervades the ranks and files of town union executives. Worse still, lack of regular trainings and retraining of the town executives have put limitations on the town unions' capacities to function effectively in line with global best practices. The study argues these challenges could be overcome if the government provides subventions to town unions to fund rural electrification projects to complement the local resources in the execution of rural electrification projects. The study equally advocates the implementation of empowerment and poverty reduction should be carried out regularly in the rural communities to the scourge of poverty.

Again, there should be regular seminar, workshops and symposia to increase the skills and knowledge required for effective and efficient smooth operations of town unions. Besides, there should be legislation mandating town executives to possess a minimum academic qualification of SSCE and there should be re-orientation of the rural people and their leaders to imbibe the culture of placing community interest above party interest in order to accelerate the contribution of town unions to the development in rural communities in Ebonyi State.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Abegunde, A. A. (2009). The role of community based organisations in economic development in Nigeria: The case of Oshogbo, Osun state, Nigeria. *International NGO Journal*, 4 (5): 236-252.
- [2]. Abegunde, A.A. (2004). Community Based Organizations in the Sustainable Development of the Rural Area of Atiba L.G.A., Oyo State. *J. Inst. Town Plan.*, 17: 1-14

- [3]. Adebayo, A.M. (1995). The Role of Community-Based Organizations in Rural Settlement: Olorunda in Lagelu Local Government as a Case Study. Unpublished Professional Diploma Dissertation, Department of Town Planning, the Polytechnic, Ibadan.
- [4]. Adedaja, A. (1996). NGOs' participatory approach to nutrition development in agricultural projects, Nigeria. IFAD/UNICEF Nutrition Workshop.
- [5]. Adejumobi, S. (1991). Processes and Problems of Community organization for self-reliance. Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan, Nigeria. Monograph Series No. 1.
- [6]. Agbola, T. (1996). Women and the Development Process: A Study of Rural Woman's
- [7]. Akinola, S.R. (2007). Coping with Infrastructural Deprivation through Collective Action. Among Rural People in Nigeria. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 16(1): 46-58.
- [8]. Akinsorotan, A.C. and Olujide, M.G. (2007). CBOs Contributions in Self-help Project. <http://www.usaid.govt/gn/sekf/helpindexhtm> .retrieved on 15/009/2010.
- [9]. Akpehe, G.A. (2006). The Activities of Community Based Organizations/NGOs in Rural Development of Benue State. An MSc Dissertation, Submitted to the Department of Sociology, HSU.
- [10]. Alkire, S., Bebbington, A., Esmail, T., Polski, A., Ryan, A., Van Domelen, J., Wakeman, W. and Dongier, P. (2000). *Community-Driven Development*. Washington DC: World Bank Publication.
- [11]. Anderson, E. and McFarlane, J. (2004). *Community as Partner*. Lippincott: Williams and Wilkins Philadelphia.
- [12]. Boreham, N. (2004). A theory of collective competence: challenging the neoliberal individualization of performance at work. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 52(1): 5-17.
- [13]. Ebeleke, C. (2007). The Koh Creek Foundation. <http://www.pnati.Lra-Nig.org/kolo/html.retrivcd> on 15/09/2010,
- [14]. Egunjobi, L. (1984). Rural Water Supply and Community Development: A study of Kajola Area of Nigeria. Sixth WEDC International 17 Conference Proceedings, Hughborough and Zaria, pp. 27-30.
- [15]. Famoriyo, S. (1995). The Role of Cooperatives in Rural Development in Nigeria. "Integrated Rural Development in Nigeria; Policy Issues and Option". Proceedings of a National Seminar on Integrated Rural Development for Nigeria.
- [16]. Fiszbein, A. (1997). The Emergence of Local Capacity: Lessons from Colombia. *World Development*, 25 (7): 1029-1043.
- [17]. Forrest, J. B. (2000). The Drought Policy Bureaucracy, Decentralization, and Policy Networks in Post-Apartheid Namibia. *American Review of Public Administration*, 30(3): 307-333.
- [18]. Korten, D. C. (1990). *Getting to the 21st Century: voluntary Action and the Glocal Agenda*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.
- [19]. Krishna, A. (2001). Moving From the Stock of Social Capital to the Flow of Benefits: The Role of Agency. *World Development*, 29 (6): 925-43.
- [20]. Lavery, S. (2005). The Community action model: A Community-driven model designed to address disparities in health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 5(4): 611-616.
- [21]. Ogunleye-Adetona, C.I. and Oladeinde, C. (2013). The role of community self help projects in rural development of Kwara state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 2(1): 28-45.
- [22]. Ogunleye-Adetona, C.I. and Oladeinde, C. (2013). The role of community self help projects in rural development of Kwara state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 2(1): 28-45.
- [23]. Olomola, A.O. (2001). Community Development Association in Osogbo. An unpublished Master of Science Dissertation. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.
- [24]. Olowu, D., Ayo, B.D. and Akande, B. (1991). *Local Institutions and National Development in Nigeria*. O.A.U. Press, Ile Ife, Nigeria.
- [25]. Oludimu, M. (1990). Appraisal of Community Women and Development Programmes in Ona-Ara Local Government of Oyo State. M.Sc. Thesis, Department of Agric. Extension and Rural Development, University of Ibadan.
- [26]. Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions For Collective Action*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- [27]. Oyeyemi, A. I. (1995). An Evaluation of Rural-Self-Development Schemes in Egbeda Local Government: Focus on Erunmu Area. Unpublished Professional Diploma Dissertation, The Polytechnic, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- [28]. Racher, F. (2007). *Running Head: The Community Health Action Model: Health Promotion by the Community*. Brandon University Press, Lancaster.

- [29]. Rubin, H. J. (2000). Economic Partnering with the Poor: Why Local Governments Should Work With Community-Based Development Organizations to Promote Economic Development. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 23(9): 1679.
- [30]. Tarrow, S. (1994). *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- [31]. World Bank (1996). *Taking Action for Poverty Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Report of an African Region Task Force. May 1- World Bank, Washington D.C.
- [32]. Yadoo, A. and Cruickshank, H. (2010). The value of cooperatives in rural electrification. *Energy Policy*, 6: 1-7.

Humphrey N. Nwobashi . “Town Unions and Provision of Electricity in Rural Communities in Ebonyi State: A Focus on Selected Communities”. ” *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. vol. 24 no. 03, 2019, pp. 63-73.