

THE ROLE OF BASIC HEALTH SERVICES IN ENHANCING SOCIO-ECONOMIC OUTCOMES IN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract

This study investigates primary health care services and socio-economic development programmes in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State Nigeria. The study applies the Participatory Development Theory in identifying the various approaches and strategies employed by the Local government towards primary health care services and socio-economic development programmes. It employs a survey design in two clans of the Local Government Area using a randomly sample of two hundred and ten (210) respondents. Data were elicited using interview schedule and structured questionnaire complemented with the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The instruments were subjected to reliability and validity test. The simple percentage, and the ordinary least square simple regression technique were used to analyse data with the aid of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0. The findings showed among others that there were quite a number of strategies/techniques/approaches employed by the local government in primary health care services delivery and socio-economic development programmes. The study recommends the participatory community development approach (PCDA) as a rural/community paradigm that will facilitate socio-economic development and value orientation among the people.

Keywords: *Local government administration, socio-economic development, primary health care, service delivery and empowerment programmer.*

INTRODUCTION

Local government to an extent has suffered socio-economic and environmental neglect and abandonment and poor infrastructure facilities due to poor government administration which could have enhanced the socio-economic status of the people. The expediency for the creation of local government globally emanates from the desire to facilitate development at the grassroots level. The significance of local government autonomy is a function of its ability to generate a sense of belongingness, safety and gratification among its inhabitants. All types of government, administrations, regimes or political systems have so far made effort to attain this goal. This is a strategy for ensuring national administrative development, and political efficacy is seen in the concept and practice of local government autonomy. Whatever is the kind of government, local government autonomy is viewed essentially and regarded as the gateway to, and guarantor of national to demarcate development of rural areas (Gaubu, 2004). In the socio-political context in Nigeria, with multiple culture, diversity in languages and differential means and needs, the significance of the autonomy of this tier of government, with a view to fostering and engendering the desired national consciousness, unity, relative uniformity, preservation of peculiar diversities and the socio-economic development programmes of rural areas cannot over debated or emphasized. Core to the creation of local

government, however, is its propensity to facilitate a channel in which government and the people intermix, relate and more rapidly than any other avenues resolve or dissolve issues which may have affected the system. Local government autonomy has been perceived as a panacea for the diverse challenges of the divergent people with different culture (Mboho, Atahirih and Udo, 2014). A local government is simply a semi-autonomous territorial unit created by the constitution or general laws of a state to undertake certain functions within specified or limited geographical location. To Agbakoba (2004), a local government is a political and administrative unit which is empowered by law to administer a specified locality. It involves a philosophical commitment to the idea of community participation and involvement in government at grassroots level which in turn will engender the needed socio-economic development of rural areas.

Local government administration in Nigeria is an off-shoot of the federal political arrangement which is basically characterized by decentralization of functions. Decentralization in this context is regarded as a process through which powers, functions, responsibilities and resources are transferred from central to local governments and/or to other decentralized entities (United Nations, 2006.). In a federal system like Nigeria, decentralization shares both political and economic justifications (Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2010). The economic-side argument emphasizes the advantages in terms of promoting inclusive and broad-based growth, optimal use of local and national resources for economic development while on the political-side, it is a valid tool for managing heterogeneities, reduce power-sharing tensions and cater for divergent needs of different societies. As such, by devolving functions to local governments, peculiar socio-political and economic needs in the localities are identified and appropriate responses sought. The United Nations Office for Public Administration cited in Adetoritse (2011) defines local government as the political subdivision of a nation (or in a federal system) state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. Adetoritse (2011) further views the local government as a multi-dimensional concept. These dimensions are socially, economically, geographically, legally, politically, and administratively. The key parameters here are that local governments exist for the purpose of delivering goods and services to the people; and to mobilize local resources and identify specific areas of needs and how they can be solved. Ismail, Bayat and Meyer (1997) write in similar vein that local governments exist for both utilitarian (service rendering) and democracy (civic) considerations. According to Ahmad (2012) the function of local government involves the philosophical commitment to participation in the growing process at the grassroots level. The closeness of local governments to the grassroots enables it to perform specific functions and services which bother on the concerns, interests and aspirations of the people in the respective domains. Specifically, the Guidelines for Local Government Reform in Nigeria (1976) recognize „local government as the third tier of governmental activity in the nation“. It further states that „local government should do precisely what the word government implies – governing at the grassroots or local level“. Through the reform process local governments in Nigeria are constitutionally recognized as the third tier of government with representative councils and have substantial control over local affairs. This is in the provision of basic social services,

initiation and implementation of specific development projects in their areas, stimulation of economic growth through local initiatives, and complementing the activities of the other levels of government (Federal and State). Mboho and Ibok (2011) identifies the functions/roles as regulatory (control of social activities), social services delivery and legislative (making laws on peculiar needs). The 1976 reforms form the basis of the present-day structural and functional arrangement in which local governments exist and operate. According to Diejomaoh and Eboh (2010), the reform formed the foundation of the present-day local government system and was an attempt to restructure the local government administration to a form fitting for modern society. The main principles of the reform are further incorporated in the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions with the subjection of autonomy, roles and functions to the State governments and a further consolidation of the tripartite system of government at the grassroots level. However, despite the institutional framework in which local governments exist and function, development and service delivery issues constitute major challenges. These issues are identified within the context of autonomy, corruption, lack of initiative to stimulate local economic growth and insufficient platform for private and nongovernmental agencies to participate in the economic development of the localities. The local population presently faces high incidence of poverty, unemployment, lack of social services, and very low economic activities. All these have caused hopelessness and discontentment within the local population. It is in this context that the article prescribes a developmental local government model which has local economic development (LED) as a mandate (Ukpong-Umo and Mboho, 2014) to address these concerns. According to World Bank (2003) „developmental local government aims to build up the economic capacity of a local area to improve its economic future and the quality of life for all by undertaking a collaborative, strategically planned process to understand, and then act upon, its own strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats“. Indent this LED approach enables local governments to become more responsible and functional to stimulate economic activities and improve socio-economic conditions of people in the localities by working in partnership with private and other non-governmental sectors. The rural areas to a great extent suffer socio-economic neglect including poor and inaccessible, roads, no infrastructural facilities, high rural drift etc. Local government autonomy would have enhanced the socio-economic status of the rural people in Nigeria. Local government autonomy is to complement the efforts of the States and national government in the task of socio-economic development of rural areas through rural development programmes.

Local Government Administration and Rural Communities Perspective

The concept of local government is or has been variously conceptualized in the literature in existence. In the words of Agbakoba (2004), a local government is a political and administrative unit that is empowered by law to administer a specific locality. He stated further that it involves a philosophical commitment to the idea of community participation and involvement in the government at the grassroots level which will invariably engender the much vaunted or desired socio-economic development of the rural areas in Nigeria. One of the most generally agreed and acceptable conceptualization of local government is that given by Marwhood (1993). He conceptualized local government as a body separated by law and has local

representatives and formal power to decide on a range of public matters. He stated that the right of the local government to make decisions is entrenched by the law and can only be altered by a new legislation. And that the local government has resources which subject to the stated limits, are expended and invested at their will or discretion. Ola and Tonwe (2005) view local government as the selection of persons rather than only election to constitute local government. Mboho and Inyang (2011) view local government as a defined area for a popularly elected democratic council. They go ahead to state that it has formal powers derived from the laws or constitution of the land, to decide on a range of public matters or issues in consultation with other stakeholders, compassing traditional rulers in the rural areas. The formal powers can only be altered by a subsequent legislation or constitutional amendment. The local government has personnel, financial resources from whatever as other resources, from whatever sources, that are deployed, expended and invested at its own discretion for the execution of legally or constitutionally assigned and mutually agreed functions for the overt socio-economic development of the rural areas. Local government autonomy in the views of Imhanlahimi and Ikeanyibe (2014) is the adequate and relative power given to local government councils to perform their local or constitutional responsibilities or duties optimally. They canvassed for two types of autonomy for local government councils which are absolute and adequate but relative in nature. To Chaturvedi (2006), local government autonomy is concerned with the local body having financial management, autonomy with a view to deciding and determining its own course of action. According to Marwood (1993) in Mboho and Udo (2013), local government autonomy as the relative separation of central local spheres of government on the one hand. On the other hand, be put forward that the central government should only play the function of monitoring the activities of local councils without any intrusion into their domain. The autonomy entails absolute separation of responsibilities and powers but relative and adequate autonomy should be granted to enable local government councils perform their functions optimally; also discharge legally or constitutionally assigned responsibilities satisfactorily without interference or restraint from the State and Federal tiers of government. Local government autonomy remains an avenue for promoting socioeconomic development of rural areas based on the yearnings or priorities of the rural dwellers in Nigeria. Local government as third tier of government brings governance to the grassroots. In doing this helps bring development to the rural area. However, the socio-economic development of the rural area will depend on the effectiveness of the local government administration in the development of the area.

Socio-Economic Development

The concept of socio-economic development also has numerous definitions in the literature. Some defined socio-economic development as an act while view it as a process. Socio-economic development is simply a process which creates growth, progress, positive change or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components. Todaro and Smith (2014) see the aspect of development as a multidimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social systems. In line with the above conceptualization by Todaro, Mboho and Ibok (2013) view socio-economic development as process of improving the quality of all human lives, such

improvement may include raising people's living levels (income, consumption, education, medical services and many others) via relevant economic growth processes. Ottong (2006) defined socioeconomic development as the act of creating conditions conducive to growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions, which promote human dignity and respect. He stated further that it implies increasing access to better life (improved welfare) and the freedom to choose by enlarging the range of choices available. In the words of Ekong (2003) cited in Mboho, Atahirih and Udo (2014), socio-economic development is a process of social change in which the people of a community organize themselves for planning and action, define their common and individual problems, and execute these maximum of reliance upon the resources of the community. Socio-economic development is the process of social and economic development in a society which is measured with indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment (Ering, 2014). It refers to society related economic factors which relate and influence one another. The greatest rationale for the creation of local government is essentially to employ it to assume responsibility for the socio-economic development and contribute to the development of rural areas. This development has been viewed from two fundamental positions - socio-economic and holistic viewpoints. The socio-economic perspective was hinged on the traditional definition that expressed concerns for social problems such as poverty, inequality and unemployment which must be alleviated to bring socio-economic development in the rural areas. The second perspective which is more current definition of development was blazed by scholars or authors such as Udoh and Mboho (2021) that gave a holistic conceptualization that development is a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions, and the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. Development invariably, must represent the entire gamut to change in which the whole social system turned to the divergent basic needs and desires of individuals, and social groups found in that system, departs from condition of life extensively perceived as unsatisfactory toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially. The contemporary conceptualization of socio-economic development is thus holistic, taking into consideration political, cultural, social, economic, religious spheres of life. Socio-economic development as currently defined encompasses the comprehensive development of man and his environment in all ramifications in a locality, under a political setting or structure such as a local government, on a participatory and sustainable manner. This is better achieved through local government autonomy, which is, on the other hand, sustained by the local government's adequate performance of the above tasks.

Health Care Services Delivery

In most OECD countries, while health care financing is socialized, delivery of health care services is secured by both public and private providers and nongovernmental organizations. The role of government is often to steer the overall health development by designing health policies and programmes, securing essential public health functions and regulating the delivery of health services. An integral psycho-social inclusive approach (Effiong and Ekpenyong 2017), which promotes social inclusion within their own community

Effiong, Mboho & Wordu (2018) and Effiong, 2019) must be considered. According to Effiong et al. (2023), the strategy combines effort of the beneficiaries, communities" health agencies and other social services for its implementation. In most OECD countries, governments provide health care services, including public goods such as promotive and preventive services and hospital care. While the role of private hospitals in service delivery is growing in these countries, public hospitals remain the reference for quality standards, prices of services, training of quality health professionals and health and medical research in various aspects. Ministry of Health is responsible for health protection and undertakes that responsibility by implementing the essential public health functions, including surveillance systems and provision of public goods such as programmes for mass immunization, environmental protection, food fortification and food safety. The delivery of essential public health functions is becoming complicated in view of increased globalization and its impact on changing lifestyles, including eating habits and the rapid increases in international travel and communication technology. In order to fulfill its public health functions and to protect national health security, governments, through ministries of health, are responsible for the provision of necessary medicines and vaccines and supporting laboratory networks. Access to quality and affordable vaccines used in national immunization programmes faces several challenges, including limited financial resources, inappropriate supply systems and lack of effective national regulatory authorities to implement quality and safety standards. Strategic decisions have to be made by governments in terms of national investment in developing self-reliance and self-sufficiency in medical technology, including medicines and vaccines. Governments are also involved in the provision of clinical services at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of health systems. These services are provided in communities, work settings and public institutions including health centres, investigation networks and hospitals. In most countries health services are provided to the military, security forces and to their dependents in special settings (Mboho and Inyang, 2011). The role of government in service delivery contributes to increasing equity in access to health care, particularly in rural and remote areas where qualified private providers, concerned about their income, are in limited supply. The direct provision of health services by governments contributes to market regulation for both pricing and quantity of services. Government-owned health and hospital facilities are the reference places for training of human resources and are often the most appropriate sites for research activities in the field of health, public health and medicine. The development of biomedical and health research is totally indebted to the support of government institutions in design, funding, protection of ethical values and in monitoring the impact of research activities on health outcomes. Governments are becoming increasingly concerned about managing the public- private mix in health service delivery, the result of the many active privatization policies initiated in welfare-oriented health systems and aimed at increasing the supply of private services. The last two decades of the 20th century witnessed waves of health policy and sector reforms aimed at improving the efficiency of health systems and increasing equity in relation to access to health care. For example, reforms have been designed to introduce private practice in publicly owned hospitals in the United Kingdom, Australia and some developing countries as part of public-private partnership. Business-oriented rules for management have

been introduced in publicly dominated service delivery systems in OECD countries and elsewhere. The main stakeholders, which include professional associations and unions, have different attitudes towards these reforms, ranging from active support to total disapproval. Governments and researchers are equally interested to assess the impact of privatization policies in equally the financing and health delivery systems (Mboho and Ibok, 2011).

Primary Health Care in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area

Accordingly, Fajiobi (2010) remarks that local governments are responsible for primary health care delivery. They are to budget, implement, manage, monitor and evaluate primary health care within the local government areas. In Nigeria local government system, the primary health care delivery is premised on eight components which are:

- i) Health Education
- (ii) Maternal and child health including family planning iii) Immunization
- iv) Prevention and control of disease
- v) Adequate water supply and sanitation vi) Food supply and nutrition vii) Provision of essential drugs viii) Treatment of minor ailments

These components and structures stem from the country's health care system.

A Health care system comprises all medical care services involved in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation service as provided by the government, public and private institutions (Mboho and Inyang, 2011). Again, health care system comprises of four-model: The individual, patient, the care, complex system of interacting approaches of human health that has an ecological base that is economically and socially viable indefinitely. In Nigeria, health care is funded by a combination of tax revenue, donor funding, user fees and health insurance, social and community (Anyika, 2015).

The Nigerian government is committed to quality and accessible public health services through provision of health care at the community areas and provision of preventive and curative service (Nigeria Constitution, 1999). Primary Health Care (PHC) is provided by local government authority through health centers and health posts and they are staffed by nurses, midwives, community health officers, health technicians, community health extension workers and by physicians (doctors) especially in the southern part of Nigeria. The services provided at these PHCs include:

- (a) Prevention and treatment of communicable disease
- (b) Immunization, maternal and child health service
- (c) Family planning, public health education, environmental health and collection of statistical data on health and health related events.

The health care delivery at LGA is headed politically by a supervisory councilor and technically and administratively by a PHC coordinator and assisted by a deputy coordinator. The PHC coordinator reports to the LGA Chairman (Federal Ministry of Health 2004; Adeyemo 2005). The different components of the LGA PHC are led by personnel of different diverse specialty. The LGA is running her primary health care

service delivery in compliance with the framework principles of the National Health Policy (Nigerian National Health Bill. 1987). Similarly, primary health system in Nigeria in spite of its strides and remarkable achievement over the years is still constrained with challenges that stem from the governance and leadership, service delivery and funding. Eyitayo (2015) remarks inadequate political commitment to primary health care development, the limited resources and failure of effectively managing the PHC, lack of logistics to facilitate taking service to remote areas, quality of service are generally poor, low priority accorded to health at all levels especially at local government, under staffing of many of the PHC facilities, poor management of health workers etc.

Challenges of Primary Health Care in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area

The essence of health care to the local government is to make the management of PHC services more effective and closer to the grassroots. However, one of the hindrances to the development of health especially in Nigeria has to do with insufficient number of medical personnel and their even distribution. The Third Development Plan (1975 to 1980) for Nigeria was the first to draw attention on the inequality in the distribution of medical facilities and manpower or personnel. Despite the desire by the government to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources, glaring disparities are still evident. The determination in government facilities, low salaries and poor working condition had resulted in a mass exodus of health professionals (Iyun, 1998). Exorbitant costs of health care services constitute a barrier to health care delivery in Nigeria (Effiong and Agha, 2020). Another significant problem in the management of the PHC is logistics of running the Primary Health Care. It has been reported in LGA, PHCs that there are not enough vehicles for workers to perform their task especially to the rural areas. Immunization outreach services are inadequately conducted. The maintenance culture of the existing vehicle is poor while PHC vehicles were used for other purposes other than health related activities. To put succinctly, many of the PHC vehicles donated by UNICEF in the 1980"s are totally non-functional (Mboho and Ibok, 2013). Inadequate finance, over dependence of the LGA on federal state and international agencies for support and the internally generated revenue of the LGA is meager (Adeyemo, 2005), have level of community involvement (Omoleke, 2005), general misuse abuse of the scare resources by some political and high leadership turnover at LGA (Adegawo, 2005). Succinctly, there are obvious challenges bedeviling the tertiary and secondary health delivery systems in Nigeria. As Abdulsalam et al. (2012) remarked that people living in remote areas show an adaptability that allows them to adjust to the adverse conditions. Despite the availability of PHC services in the local government area, some rural dwellers tend to underuse the services due to perception of poor quality and inadequacy of available services. Furthermore, Sule et al (2008) indicates that various reasons can be adduced for the underuse of the services provided.

- (a) Difficulties associated with transportation and communication.
- (b) High rate of illiteracy among rural people.
- (c) Traditional conservatism and resistance to ideas from outside; deep rooted traditions and customs, including health beliefs and practices, which increase the patronage of the services of traditional healers.

- (d) Lack of understanding of Primary health care practice among health professionals and decision makers resulting poor quality services.
- (e) A tendency to press older children into adult responsibilities early, resulting in psychological problems due to role conflict.
- (f) Endemic disease prevalence such as malaria and trachoma.
- (g) Zoonotic diseases as a result of their close contact from the work place.

Empowerment Programmes and Socio-economic Development Programmes

According to the World Bank report (1975) cited in Mboho (2021), empowerment is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people while disempowered includes the rural poor. The group of the poor includes others as small-scale farmers, tenants and the landless. Meanwhile, Ekanem (2004) views empowerment as a means to extend the benefits of socioeconomic and political development in the economy to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas. More so, Empowerment is seen as a socio-economic or political act by the State or its agencies, private individuals or corporate organization aimed at transforming the socio-economic well-being of the disempowered. This group includes the rural urban poor, small-scale farmers, the landless and the unemployed, but whose remuneration cannot afford them the basic necessities of life. The group is equally involved the sick and the maimed who cannot have access to quality healthcare services, the illiterate, who have no access to educational facilities and the destitute who cannot afford decent meals and shelter (Duru, 2013). For this, empowerment refers to the mean or way of enhancing the life condition of the powerless or less privileged ones (particularly, the youths and the women) in the local government area. The youths and women are considered to be disempowered because they lack trainings, skills, experiences and credit facilities after their education and apprenticeship to demonstrate their potential and giftedness. Youth unemployment is one of the most cancerous problems inhibiting sustained economic growth and development in Nigeria. Youth unemployment has led to a lot of the social vices. Prominent among them include internet and other frauds, kidnapping, armed robbery, destitution, prostitution, terrorism and political thuggery, among others (Mboho, 2021). Growth and development depend on the level of the resourcefulness of its citizens, majorly the youths (Olajide & Akojenu, 2017). Growth and development could also be encouraged when youths in the society are gainfully employed and a rise in per capital income of the economy is seen. Job creation and self-reliance of youths could be enhanced through deliberate government policies geared toward a functional entrepreneurial program. It is no gain saying that entrepreneurship is the antidote to unemployment problems in developing countries (Mboho, 2021). However, empowering and preparing Nigerian youths to thrive well in the unstructured and uncertain nature of today"s entrepreneurship environment is not an easy task. Nigeria youths face a lot of challenges that can only be met if they are innovative, well-educated, and entrepreneurial citizens who have the spirit and inquisitiveness to think in new ways and the courage to meet and adapt to the challenges facing them in all facets of life (Mboho, 2021). Nigerian youths have recently been targeted and a lot of resources committed to their training and

empowerment in various entrepreneurship by Nigerian government through its various agencies, World Bank, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and even private sector philanthropists (Central Bank of Nigeria [CBN], 2012).

Government through the CBN initiated and supported Entrepreneurship

Development Centres (EDCs), launched the Microfinance Policy, Regulatory and Supervisory Framework for Nigeria, introduced between 2006 and 2008 the NYSC sensitization, Venture Prize Competition, and NYSC Entrepreneurship Training Programmes, among others, to help empower the youths and diversify the economy (CBN, 2012). It has also indulged in some programs such as Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN!), Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria (YISA), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE-P), Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Africa Youth Empowerment Nigeria (AYEN), Youth Entrepreneur Support Program (YES-P), and N-Power Empowerment Program. Some NGOs and private-sector philanthropists have also committed some resources too. Examples include Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (YEDI), Diamond-Crest for Youth Education Foundation, Tony Elumelu Foundation for Entrepreneurship in Africa, New Era Foundation, and Youth for Technology Foundation, LEAP Africa, among others. They were done with the aim of enhancing jobs creation, poverty reduction, income generation to individuals and government thereby bringing economic diversification which will lead to economic growth and development. In addition, governments, NGOs, and private-sector philanthropists have made several efforts in recent times to develop entrepreneurship by granting youth's start-up capitals in the form of loans, entrepreneurship trainings, among others. However, after the entrepreneurship trainings, the start-up capital or loans are very meager to actually start up the business. The loans are also accompanied by interests which make it difficult to Nigerian youths to take up the loan and breakeven. Some loans which have low interests on them have very stringent conditions that make it unobtainable by average Nigerian youth. They are given to rich and already established entrepreneurs, people they know very well, or to their relatives. Empowerment can be seen as the ability to direct and control one's own life. This point of view is shared by Mboho (2021), to whom empowerment means, that women reclaim "the right to decide about their own life and to influence social change, through their ability to gain control over crucial natural and cultural resources". She further notes that empowered women have increased their power in terms of their own self-esteem and internal force rather in terms of domination over others. Women empowerment as seen by the UN, (1975) is the opportunity given to the women folk to develop their potentials and contribute to the benefit and development of their societies on equal basis with men. Okeke (1995) defined women empowerment as increasing the capacity of women to control of their own lives; to gain ability to do things, to set their own agenda of what to do and how to do things that affect them. According to NEEDS (2004), it is the ability of the government to fully integrate women by enhancing their capacity to participate in the economic, social, political and cultural life. However, as Amujiri (2007) states it is the breaking away from the circle of learned and taught submission to discrimination carried on from one generation to another to a situation that will encourage and give recognition to the potentials of women as human beings created by God. It is therefore clear from the

foregoing that women empowerment is a way of mobilizing women to engage in diverse decision making activity identify ways for poverty elimination and increased means of healthy development to themselves. Suffice it to say here that women empowerment does not mean male domination by women, but simply the exclusion of all forms of discrimination among women to enable them participate fully in all community development programmes. Empowerment increases the power of women in taking control over issues that will shape their lives, it acts as a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater decision making power and control. Women empowerment if seriously pursued will enable women according to Sadik (1996) make the transition from the periphery to the centre of the situations and decisions that will shape their lives. Nevertheless, following the view of UNICEF, (1993) empowerment should be addressed at the level of basic welfare services, access to resources, concretization and participation to control of power. Nigerian women through various empowerment programmes in form of organizations such as Better Life for the Rural Women, Family Support Programme to Family Economic Advancement Programme have been experiencing women empowerment though it is still very minimal. The existence of this organizations and more like it, have given the Nigerian women the opportunity to make solid foundations to restore the dignity of woman. As Lanre (2009) puts it, "they are no more petrified, where their predecessors tiptoed around", they are as bold as they come, they find every subject interesting and this only means that Nigerian women has embraced women empowerment. The American Secretary of State, Mboho, (2021) stated in USAID programme that empowering women is a high-yield investment, resulting in stronger economies, more vibrant civil societies, healthier communities and greater peace and stability.

Theoretical Framework

This research work depends on the sustainable development theory and the participatory development theory.

Sustainable Development Approach

Sustainable Development Approach subscribes to the sustainable development and livelihoods theory. According to Cernea (1993), the social components of sustainability are no less important than the economic and technical ones "putting people first" in project improves social organization and increases social capital. The case for environmentally sustainable development is usually argued in economic, technical and ecological terms. Many are tempted to think that if they can "get the economy right", everything else will fall into place. Soothing as this econo-mythical invocation may be, it is nonetheless one sided. The social components of sustainability are no less important. Indeed, failure to recognize the determinant role of the "social actors" has doomed many programmes trying to induce development. Udo and Mboho (2020) argue that sustainable development is widely agreed to be a good but vague idea, and one that has lasted because it appeals to a wide range of political interests while avoiding the kind of rigorous definition which would prescribe specific kinds of policy. Perhaps achieving social institution is itself so difficult that discussing their maintainability is not very useful; perhaps goals are even more

dynamic in a social context than in an ecological one, so that maintainability is not such an important attribute of social institutions and structures (Lele, 1991).

On the relationship between ecological and social categories objectives, Lele asserts that there is no contradiction between social and ecological sustainability, but criticized the assumption that 'participation or at least equity and social justice will necessarily reinforce ecological sustainability and cited Jodha's evidence from India that social equity may contradict ecological objectives (Lele, 1991). This implies a neutral view of social sustainability which separates it from equity, participation, and social justice. According to Lele (1991), there have been many and varied definitions of sustainable development and related concepts such as sustainable livelihoods, but analysis of these reveals four (4) core elements of sustainable development objectives.

- i) Progress: Improving the quality of life (multidimensional, and better than a basic minimum).
- ii) Justice (universal human right for present and future generations, and equity more generally).
- iii) Durability (achieving progress that is lasting and which does not unduly restrict options for several generations to come).
- iv) Stability/resilience (being adaptive and avoiding excessive fluctuation; ability to recover quickly from shocks).

Thus, analysis and policies can reasonably be labeled as sustainable development only if they are concerned with all of these core elements. This implies that, the analysis of contemporary quality of life and equity is not about sustainable development unless equity across several generations is considered.

The environment is at risk not from some extra-terrestrial enemies, but from human beings, including both local and distant resource users. Thus, the call for "putting people first" in policies and investment programmes for inducing development, or for assistance in spontaneous development, is not a radical call: it is a realistic one. In the words of the author, it simply means recognizing the centrality of the social actors and their institutions in sustainable development. It thus implies that, sustainability must be "socially constructed" - that is, arrangements of a social and economic nature must be made purposively. It is for this reason that building sustainability must be approached as a threefold task-social, economic and ecological simultaneously.

The Participatory Development Approach

The Participatory Development Theory is popularly referred to as "Popular Participation", "Participatory Rapid Appraisal". "Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)" and "Participatory Action Research (PAR)". The participatory development approach emerged as an alternative to the conventional 'top - down' approach to rural development. Participatory development theory had increased in popularity since the 1970's, when it grew out of the concern for meeting basic needs and reaching the poorest of the poor (Atairet, Mboho and Aborh, 2021) Theis and Grady (1991) observed that participatory action research emerged as a result of the failure of the old development approaches built on the trickle down principles. With the unrealistic nature of transfer of technology, researchers and development experts began to appreciate the complex relationship between the environment, economy, culture and

politics in rural societies. According to Rahman (1981), the basic ideology of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) is that a self-conscious people, those who are currently poor and oppressed will progressively transform their environment by their own proxis. The role of others such as facilitators from the government or NGO's or other professionals, is to act as catalyst and play a supporting role, "but will not dominate". Of the way, PAR seeks to eliminate previous efforts at development of the rural areas, which was characterized by at dominant/dominated relationship, irrespective of whoever sponsored the development effort. It places emphasis on the people's initiative to seek to improve their own conditions, in the generation of indigenous knowledge to complement professional knowledge, which takes off from their traditional culture and seeks to preserve the physical environment with which they have an organic association (Ataire; Mboho and Aborh, 2021). PAR's major objective of this model is to empower the poor to be self-reliant and freedom. The elements of empowerment according to Rahman are 'autonomous, democratic people's organizations, and the restoration of the status and promotion of popular knowledge'. In its simplest form, participatory development is one, which carries the rural people along at every stage of the development process. According to Nyoni (1981), participation is a sine qua non of the success of PAR's activities. He stated thus, "the very notion of participation implies that nothing should be hidden from the people". They are involved in the identification and prioritization of activities to be undertaken, decision-making and planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The Over Seas Development Administration (ODA) sees the approach as promoting greater efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. According to ODA (1995), projects or programmes under stakeholder participation are:

- i) More efficient because, by involving all integrated parties, a wider knowledge pool that supports better design and implementation is available; also, financial and other costs can be shared.
- ii) More effective because stakeholders' varied interests can be identified and addressed in the design; while shared ownership of project implies that there is a greater chance of achieving the intended outcome; and
- iii) More sustainable because people are encouraged to use their knowledge and take initiatives. Also, they gain skills and confidence to maintain the benefits of the project.

Participatory Development Approach takes off with a process known as Problem Posing (Modo, 1994). It enables professional, consultants and government officials to learn from and with rural people, directly and enhances their understanding of the perception, priorities and needs of the rural people. Participatory development approach is important because of its potentials for the conscientization and empowerment of the people for whom development is planned. Nature of this research demands that emphasis be placed on a theory which his capable of pointing a new way forward for the possible success of development policies in Akwa Ibom State; this makes the participatory development theory very valuable. It is a theoretical orientation of choice because it ramifies the possibility of combating poverty through socio-economic approach and institutional efficacy. Attempt is made to justify this theory in just a position of government eradication strategies and poverty alleviation. The participatory development theory was a new optimism that the pursuit of growth with equity or a strategy of targeting basic human needs would

succeed where economic growth failed (Ataire, Mboho and Aborh, 2021). The theoretical approach is very relevant within the context of this study because through collective learning and mobilization, it will empower the rural people to identify their own problems, needs and opportunities; provide practical research based on information that will help them to solve the problems, and assist them to take advantage of the opportunities to improve their lot. Although participatory development theory has been criticized by some theorists (Mboho, 2021), it remains the theory of choice since it has a rural focus and gears toward the improvement in the standard of living of the people.

Objectives of the Study

The focus of the study is to investigate primary health care services and socio-economic development programmes in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State

Nigeria, with the specific objectives:

- i. To examine what Ikot Ekpene Local Government council has done toward the provision of health care services to its people.
- ii. To examine the socio-economic development programmes in the rural areas of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area.

Research Hypothesis

To achieve the objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated in null form:

H₀₁: Local Government administration has no impact towards the provision of health care services to the people of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area

H₀₂: There is no socio-economic development programmes in the rural areas of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area

H₀₃: Socio-economic development has no significant impact on the development of rural areas of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The survey research design was adopted in gathering data in order to reach a valid conclusion. Also, the design was appropriate for gathering information from the respondents required for the study as it provides a way for selecting adequate representative from the population itself with the same social characteristics. In order to streamline; it also employed multi-stage cluster sampling. It was conducted in two (2) clans of the Local Government Area using a sample of two hundred and ten (210) respondents, randomly selected. A total of nine (9) political wards and twenty seven (27) villages were used as sample areas of the study. Data were collected through an interview schedule and structured questionnaire, complemented with the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The research instruments were subjected to reliability and validity test. A simple percentage was used to analyze the socio-demographic data of respondents, while the simple regression technique was used to test the hypothesis. It was because the technique allowed the researcher to establish the nature and degree of relationship between the variables. In ascertaining the relationship between variables, ordinary least square simple regression technique was used with the help of SSPS version 20.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.289 ^a	.084	.080	2.736

a. Predictors: (Constant), LGA

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	152.635	1	152.635	20.387	.000 ^b
Residual	1669.587	223	7.487		
Total	1822.222	224			

a. Dependent Variable: PHC

b. Predictors: (Constant), LGA`

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	29.260	1.660		17.625	.000
LGA	.411	.091	.289	4.515	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PHC

The result above shows that the regression intercept was 29.260. This means that if local government administration (LGA) is held constant, the value of primary health care (PHC) will be 29.260. The regression coefficient of local government administration (LGA) has a positive value of 0.411, thereby showing a direct relationship with primary health care. In other word, a naira increase in the amount budgeted for health sector in the Local Government Area will lead to the same naira increase in primary health care development. The goodness of the model shows that about 8.4% of the variation experienced in the primary health care may be explained by local government administration. The study also shows that local government administration was statistically significant with its probability value (0.000) which is less than a 0.05 level of significance. From the result on the table above, the Prob (F-Stat) was 0.000 which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the model was statistically reliable at a 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that Local Government administration has no impact towards the provision of health care services to the people of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area is rejected.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.289 ^a	.083	.079	4.191

a. Predictors: (Constant), GEP

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	355.901	1	355.901	20.261	.000 ^b
Residual	3917.148	223	17.566		
Total	4273.049	224			

a. Dependent Variable: SED

b. Predictors: (Constant), GEP

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	26.912	1.982		13.582	.000
GEP	.499	.111	.289	4.501	.000

a. Dependent Variable: SD

The result above shows that the regression constant was 26.912. This means that if Government empowerment programmes (GEP) is held constant, the value of the socioeconomic development (SED) will be 26.912%. The regression government empowerment programmes (GEP) has a positive value of 0.499, thereby showing a directive relationship with sustainable democracy. The goodness of the model is shown by the coefficient of determination of 0.083, which shows that about 8.3% of the variation experienced by socio-economic development may be explained by government empowerment programmes. The remaining 91.7 can be explained by other variables not stated in the model but capture by error term. The study also shows the statistical significant of government empowerment programmes in the model. This is shown by comparing the probability value of government empowerment programmes with the 0.05 level of significance. From the above result, the probability value of government empowerment programmes was 0.000 which is less than a 0.05 level of significance. From the above result, the Prob (F-Stat) was 0.000 which is less than the 80 significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the model was statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no socio-economic development programmes in the rural areas of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area is rejected.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.424 ^a	.180	.177	3.963

a. Predictors: (Constant), LGA

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	769.993	1	769.993	49.017	.000 ^b
Residual	3503.056	223	15.709		
Total	4273.049	224			

a. Dependent Variable: RC

b. Predictors: (Constant), LGA

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	23.693	1.741		13.608	.000
LGA	.684	.098	.424	7.001	.000

a. Dependent Variable: RC

The result above shows that the regression constant was 23.693. This means that without the contribution of local government administration (LGA), the value of the roads construction (RC) will be 23.693. The regression coefficient of local government administration (LGA) has a positive value of 0.684, thereby showing a directive relationship with roads construction. This means that the more effective in the construction and maintenance of roads by the local government, the more socio-economic development will be in the area and vice versa. The goodness of the model is shown by the coefficient of determination of 0.18, which shows that about 18% of the variation experienced by socio-economic development (road construction) may be explained by local government administration. The remaining 82% can be explained by other variables not stated in the model but capture by error term.

The study also shows the statistical significant of local government administration in the model. This is shown by comparing the probability value of local government administration with the 0.05 level of significance. From the above result, the probability value of infrastructural facilities was 0.000 which is less than a 0.05 level of significance. To evaluate the overall performance of the model, we examine whether local government administration has any relationship with roads construction (RC) using the F-

statistics. From the above result, the Prob (F-Stat) was 0.000 which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the whole model was statistically reliable at a 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that socio-economic development has no significant impact on the development of rural areas of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area is rejected. The finding of the first hypothesis is in line with the view of Akinseye (2020), citing the World Health Organization (2012), he opined that "health is a condition of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not only the absence of diseases or disability." The greatest way to ensure everyone takes access to health care and services is through primary health care (PHC), which is both efficient and effective. The result obtained from the hypothesis three, revealed that local government administration has a significant impact on the roads construction in Ikot Ekpene L.G.A. The finding of this study is in line with Oduwaye (2004). He asserted that with good accessibility, a good road network has a way of influencing property values and improved transportation facilities. The major essence of rural roads is to provide a means of evacuating farm products to market, raw materials to industries and to also enhance efficient service delivery at the local level, especially in the areas of agriculture, health, education, and social development.

The Rural Development: Concept and Application

Rural areas in the State are endowed with enormous human, material and natural resources which if properly utilized and harnessed could sustainably transform these areas.

- i) Proper utilization and harnessing of these resources could only take place through cogent and effective involvement/mobilization strategies.
- ii) Involvement/Mobilization of rural people for rural development can only be achieved through a participatory approach which will enable the peasants to be involved and empowered in every phase of the development process.
- iii) Development of the rural areas should also take into cognizance the basic needs of the peasants if such development is to be sustained. This is because improving the livelihood of the rural poor implies the satisfaction of real basic needs, and not perceived needs.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, this research work has attempted a brief discussion of local government as an agent of socio-economic development. It concludes that the position occupied by local government in the socio-economic development of a nation is undisputable. Hence, Local governments are well positioned to promote local economic development in areas under their jurisdiction. It was discovered that the range of services rendered by the local government have the capability of touching the life of citizen in their local communities, influences their social and economic behaviours and ultimately, equipping them with ideals necessary for prosperous nation building. It is therefore believed that strong and effective local governments are critical to ensuring social and economic development that is inclusive and sustainable, providing access to decent livelihoods for all members of their communities and their contributions and associations to more effective and sustainable development can only be of value if they are strengthened to play this role.

In view of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Ikot Ekpene local government administration needs to ensure that the infrastructures for health care services are well designed, designated and maintained.
- ii. There should be development of manpower e.g community health extension workers (CHEW) through continuous training and education of employees.
- iii. Chairman and members of council of Ikot Ekpene local government area should improve on its provision of human empowerment programmes, such as skill acquisition, women/youth empowerment, health and financial empowerment programmes, to boost socio-economic development of the area.
- iv. Ikot Ekpene local government Chairman and members of council should expand its provision of social amenities such as accessible road which will help to improve the socioeconomic life of rural people.
- v. There is need for town planning in each local government of the federation to describe and determine a very clear road network in terms of accessibility, connectivity, compactness, density and maintenance particularly on local government roads. So also there should be a deliberate effort by the government to encourage communities to continue with self-help schemes in solving the problem of a rural road.

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