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Community Government Councils and Rural Development in Aboh-Mbaise Local Government Area, Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study focused on community government councils and rural development in Imo State (2011 – 2019). The study was carried out based on the need to identify the contributions of CGCS to rural development. The study used vacuum filling theory, and data were collected from secondary sources. It was discovered that the community government councils have not achieved these goals, hence poor primary health services, and poor rural road maintenance. The study concludes that the achievement of rural development in Nigeria in general and Imo state in particular depends on the effectiveness of community government councils. On the basis of the above, this study recommends that the current Imo State government should empower community government councils to provide rural health services. More so, the government at the state and local government council should encourage the community government through finance to enable them maintain rural roads.

Key words: community government councils, rural development, primary health services, and rural roads maintenance.

Introduction
After Nigeria's independence in 1960, federal and regional governments vigorously pursued conscious and deliberate policies of transforming rural areas. First, the regional governments of the 1960s established the farm settlement schemes which gave rise to the various farm plantations spread across states of the federation.

As such, Ezeanyika and Okoroafor (2019) forcefully argue that rural development is a

sine-qua-non for national development. Igbozurike (1991) cited in (Ezeanyika & Okorofor 2019) affirmed that rural development is a short cut to national development. Most rural development policies made for the development of the rural areas are hijacked by urban dwellers, thereby bringing in urban bias. To this end, Ezeanyika (2006), aversed that development should begin from the rural areas/communities (the local government) at the bottom of the social ladder to semi-urban/urban centers (the national environment) that are the top. For rural development to attain this feat, it must be well coordinated and applied and for it to be so, the rural dwellers must be well trained to properly initiate and implement their programmes according to their yearnings and aspirations.

To improve the condition of life of the people, and achieve pragmatic rural development (which will allow effective participation of rural people), the Community Government Councils were introduced in Imo State in 2011; hence the Community Government Councils were introduced in Imo State by Rochas Okorocha administration from 2011-2019. The concept of community government according to Ibegwam (2012) is a way of taking development and government to the rural areas or communities. In the same vein, (Anyanwu, 2012) declares that the community development council or the fourth tier government is expected to assist in the performance of government functions at the grassroots levels of the state. Community government as rural governance concept was carried to replace the age-old Town Unions; but now enlarged enough to assume a government system, headed by a President-General, with active participation of the community-elected Eze (paramount ruler).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many governments of Nigeria (and Imo State) in the past have engaged in rural development programmes. However, many of them were not successful. These programmes had faulty backgrounds, no community involvement, riddled with corruption, no political will to do what is right and follow programmes to a logical conclusion. In some cases the rural development efforts ended up enriching the political class with little or no benefit for the rural people (Okeke 2018).

In this case, despite government efforts to achieve grass root development and transformation; there is still presence of high rate of poverty, food insecurity, low standard of living, poor health and educational services, poor roads infrastructures, insecurity etc, which undermined the general well being of the people at the grass root and rural communities in Nigeria. This means that a review of rural development in Nigeria and Imo State in particular seems to show serious neglect and abandonment of the rural areas. The neglect of rural areas in development matters left rural dwellers in abject poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and increase in maternal and infant mortality, sickness and diseases, insecurity, etc. Based on that, this study focused on community government councils and rural development in Imo State (2011 – 2019).

The general objective of this study focused on community government councils and rural development. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify the extent community government councils have contributed to primary health care in Imo State.
2. To determine the relationship between community government councils and rural roads maintenance in Imo State.

Rural Development

Before the concept rural development can be explained for effective academic comprehension, the terms "rural" and development have to be well explained. Egbe (2014) asserts that "rural" connotes a place with agricultural orientation; the houses are farm houses, barns, sheds and other structures of similar purposes. This definition is primitive as it did not recognize the 21 century trend or improvement in rural areas. Although Nigeria rural areas are agrarian, but they do not really deserve this kind of description given by Egbe which seemed more derogatory than informative. Consequently, Ibe (2019) defined the term "rural" as a non urban settlement or settlement whose population has agriculture as a major occupation or means of livelihood. This definition captures the situation of Nigeria rural areas. Here, many rural villages are immersed in poverty so palpable that the people are the embodiment of it. In most rural areas in Nigeria, basic infrastructure where they exist at all, are two inadequate for meaningful development".

Depicting rural areas as depressed, degraded and deprived show that rural areas in Nigeria are the worst neglected (Ibe, 2019). These features are deplorable and rather unfortunate. The goal of rural people is to achieve development; hence the issue of development in rural communities. In this case, Olewe (2001) opined that the word "Development" has been derived from two French expressions viz: 'de-meaning "apart" and 'voloper' meaning "to wrap". He further said that to develop therefore means: To bring ideas, plans, programmes, etc, into reality; to cause to become gradually, fuller, larger, better, modern, stronger, etc; To cause to evolve gradually; To cause houses, roads, etc to be more available and/or extensive; and to grow or make progress. Also, development is an act or process of bringing ideas, plans, programmes into reality making the society to become gradually fuller, larger, better, modern and stronger, to grow and make progress. This means that development is not a free gift of nature, it has to be but must be carefully conceptualized, articulated, planned and implemented through the instrumentality of institutional frameworks designed especially for that purpose and in due knowledge of the environment (Nwodu 2011). These are the systems of formal laws, regulations and procedures and informal conventions, customs, and norms that shape development activities.

Abah (2019) avers that development means "… to improve, to make progress, change for the better, higher income or better living standard". Development is progressive growth and

onward movement. It is the change that remains constant. It is the necessary part of societies; hence, any society without it is static because societies are dynamic. Oluseyi (2018), avers that rural development is actually focused on organized human and natural resources designed to provide solutions to the perennial problems of poverty and deprivation of rural folks with a view of raising their living conditions. For rural development to work, there must be organized human and natural resources designed to provide a solution to the continuing problem of poverty and deprivation of rural people with the view to lifting them to a better state of life. For this to happen, both the human and natural resources in the rural areas have to be fully and meaningfully engaged. This is where the bottom-up and top-down approach of rural development comes in. Here, government has to be fully involved to motivate the rural people. Ibe (2019) defined rural development as the improvement of the living standard of the people of low income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining. This means that the rural people had to be put on the path of development and then allowed to improve. Rural development here has to be self-sustaining, meaning that the people will continue where government and external supporters stopped. Rural development is also the changes in the social and economic structures, institutions, relationships and processes in the context of rural population or people (Ibe, 2019). Furthermore, some scholars have defined rural development as a process. Rural development as a process of empowering the rural people by harnessing and mobilizing their human and material resources for the purpose of transforming their environment for the better and providing their socio-economic needs ranging from employment, qualitative healthcare, improved nutrition, adequate and comfortable accommodation, good quality education and adequate security.

Rural development as summed from the above is a process that which empowers the local people for the improvement of their lives through enactment of policies, organization and application of principles, self-sustaining strategies and thorough changes in the social and economic structures, institutions, and relationships among the people. These improvements of life are in the areas of qualitative healthcare, gainful employment, improved nutrition, good quality education, adequate security of life and property, improved income, etc.

Community Government Council (CGC): History, and Meaning and Objectives

What is known today as Community Government Council (CGC) existed even before the advent of the white man, and continued during colonial (through the indirect rule form of government); hence did not just start with the Rochas Okorocha administration in Imo State in 2011 (Nwarieji & Ifeanyieze, 2016). This is because Pre-colonial Nigeria experienced traditional administrative systems where the natives organized themselves administratively for the day-to-day running of their various administrations of pre-colonial Nigeria especially among the Nigerians of Igbo extraction, had governmental bodies like the Council of Elders, Town Unions, Youths, Umuada and many others. Through the ingenuity of these bodies, the

traditional Igbo societies were administered efficiently with the presence of meaningful development and as such South Eastern Nigeria has long been reputed for their community development efforts. It is stated that during the colonial days and after independence, through constituted voluntary organizations like development unions, town unions, and age grades, communities themselves financed and constructed development projects like roads and bridges, health centers and as well as primary and secondary schools (Ukposong, Chikaire, Nwakwasi, Ejiogu & Emeana, 2011).

It is amazing that they also organized and awarded scholarships in training their sons and daughters in institutions of higher learning. Notably, these projects were taken without any form of statutory backing by government, leading to the enactment of the Development Administration Edict of 1971 (Eze 1971 cited in Nkwocha, Achubie and Izim, 2016). The vision of the new system under government is that communities become the fundamental units of administration, as Eze further explained,

> …councils are to be created at levels where democratic process are traditionally established, where rivalries and tensions are reduced to a minimum, where local resources and patriotism can be fully utilized, and where local people can effectively control their affairs. In this system indigenous ideas are expected to dominate. Thus, councilors are to be selected by traditional methods and most revenue is to be raised by direct local contribution and donation (Eze 1971 cited in Nkwocha, Achubie and Izim 2016; P.25).

The above exposition by Eze (1971) clearly reveals that in the south eastern Nigeria, community administration was well consolidated by way of town unions, development unions, as well as village and kindred groups. Post-independent Nigeria councils created in observance of the existing pre independent traditional set up in eastern communities, which had already created the platform for peace and harmony, accessible resources and effective control of affairs by the locals. The councilors were chosen from among the indigenous people whose ideals were expected to dominate in the day to day running of the communities. In modern day Nigeria, it is left with government to enact viable policies that can lift rural communities from their state of lack, poverty, degradation and abandonment to a state of riches and great abundance (Ibe, 2019). These policies must be consistent with the imperative of equitable and effective service delivery. But be it as it may, Imo State had not had any equitably designed framework and measures for its rural development and sustainability.

This detached disposition of government has placed rural communities in perpetual precociousness visibly characterized by neglect, illiteracy, poverty and disease, and as an enclave of unsustainable resources exploitation, especially agriculture (Nkwocha, Achubie and Izim, 2016). It is therefore in the process to solve the above mentioned problems that the

Imo State government under Rochas Okorocha and his Rescue Mission agenda created the Community Government Councils (CGCS) to effect even development in the rural areas in Imo state. This attested to the willingness of the state government to develop Imo state rural areas, the state and Nigeria in general. The creation of the community government councils was a pointer to the failure of the local government which should have been an agent of rural mobilization and development. It also showed the unwillingness of government to reinvigorate it. The community government councils (CGCS) would bring governance to the grass roots, provide essential services to the rural communities and create an environment that enhances rural transformation and economic empowerment.

The rational for the establishment or creation of any government or its myriads of administrative network is to effectively run society for the betterment of its citizens (Nwarieji & Ifeanyieze, 2016). Citizen fulfillment and peace in all aspects is the end result of every government. The people are the custodians of power in the state as power belongs to the people. People in turn especially in a democratic setting elect a selected few to represent them and in turn hand over this power and authority over to them to see to their daily needs. Any government that does not fulfill this noble and singular obligation to its citizens is not fit to exist. But unfortunately, many levels of government have failed the citizens in this area. This is why government keeps on bringing up different kinds of government and administrative bodies to fulfill this task. It was for this purpose that the local government authority was created in Nigeria, to take government to the grass root. It was a government that would be closer to the rural people. However, the local government failed in this noble duty and left the rural areas underdeveloped for decades with little or nothing to show for the billions of Naira expended in rural governance. As a matter of necessity, the people in the rural areas still yearn for improvement of their well being (Obi, 2019). They wanted government to come closer to them so that they could participate in the processes that address their problems. It was based on these justifiable reasons that the government of former Governor Rochas Okorocha of Imo state established the Community Government Councils (CGCS) in 2011.

The rural people the most abandoned and neglected in terms of accessibility of social and economic resources (Ezeanyika, and Okoroafor, 2019). The Community Government Councils would be a means for grass root development and transformation. The CGC has the mandate of developing the grass root communities by improving the conditions of living of the people and affording them the opportunity of participating in the local government in order to meet their needs and expectations based on their own peculiarities in the development process (Nosiri & Nwachukwu, 2016). It is also important that the term government should also be explained for this discourse on community government council to be complete and well understood. A government is defined as the agency or machinery through which the will of the state is formulated, expressed and realized (Appadorai, 1975 cited in Okorafor, 2019). The governments as an agency or machinery of the state formulate and implement policies for

the effective function of the state. It is through this agency that the services of the state are rendered. Noting the noble contributions of scholars like Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Locke on government as a social contract, Okorafor (2019) says that it allows us to focus on the agreement of the people, which implies that the idea of government originates as an implied contract among individuals to obey laws in exchange for the protection of their rights (Dye & Robinson, 1994 cited in Okorafor 2019). It suggests therefore that government connotes few people who are elected to represent the entire masses to do for them that which they could not do for themselves. These groups of people elected to represent and lead others are professionals in different fields of endeavours and they do this with the view to provide the wellbeing of the people. The essence of every government is for good, to make the people feel the impact of government no matter where they reside.

Community government council is a local administrative structure created by the state government at the autonomous community level which is managed by the people through their democratically elected representatives with the ultimate aim of community development (Okorafor 2019). From the above definition, community government council is locally based. It is not only situated in the local community, it also has the local people, making up its administrative structure. All the officials that made up the personnel of the CGC are elected from among the local people except a representative from the state government ministry. CGC therefore is a government of the people and managed by the people. The CGC can also be defined as a community based government established at the community level by the state government to ensure and manage community affairs (Umeh, 2013). Here, Umeh tries to identify the creator of the CGC as the state government with the purpose of overseeing the affairs of the community. The government of Imo State created the Imo CGC through the Act of Law before it was established under the Community Council Law of Imo state (Ibegwam, 2012). The CGC oversees the affairs of the local community. It informs the people of the current happenings in the state. With it, people in the communities are no longer in the dark about government activities. The CGC was created to replace the local government which has failed in its responsibilities in rural participation and development. The CGC would reach the people and unlock the resources in the rural areas in Imo state. The communities can be economically viable. Through this measure agriculture will be improved as land will be put to optimal utilization for provision of food and gainful employment for the local people.

The objectives of CGC are as follows:

- The CGC addresses the socio-economic needs of rural communities
- The CGC was also established to decentralize power and bring government to the people.
- To bring development to the areas
- To adequately harness the human and natural resources in the rural areas by the rural people themselves

- To develop the agricultural sector of rural areas.
- To train and improve the human resources in the rural areas
- To serve as a long lasting tool for rural government
- To make the rural people to be part of the government that oversees their own affairs by themselves and for themselves.
- To maintain continuity of government policies and projects.

Furthermore, before a community is conferred the status of community government, it must fulfill the following criteria;

1. Must have a population of at least 5,000
2. It should have a primary school, a secondary school, a health centre, a church and a market.
3. It must have a town hall building with up to ten (10) rooms.
4. It must have a traditional ruler (an Eze).

There are basic people that made up the CGC in different autonomous communities. Therefore, Structure of CGC is as follows:

1. Traditional Ruler
2. President General
3. Woman Leader
4. Youth Leader
5. A Career Civil Servant

Traditional Ruler: According to PART XIII of the Autonomous Community Councils Administration Law No. 1 of (2012), the traditional ruler of the autonomous community is both the head of his community and the CGC. He is the head of the council and can influence the council due to the power he posses. As the Eze of the Autonomous Community, he assumes the position of Chairman of the CGC (Nwarieji & Ifeanyieze, 2016). To qualify as the chairman of the CGC, he must be the Eze of the community and must be resident in the community. He must be sane and free of any criminal charge.

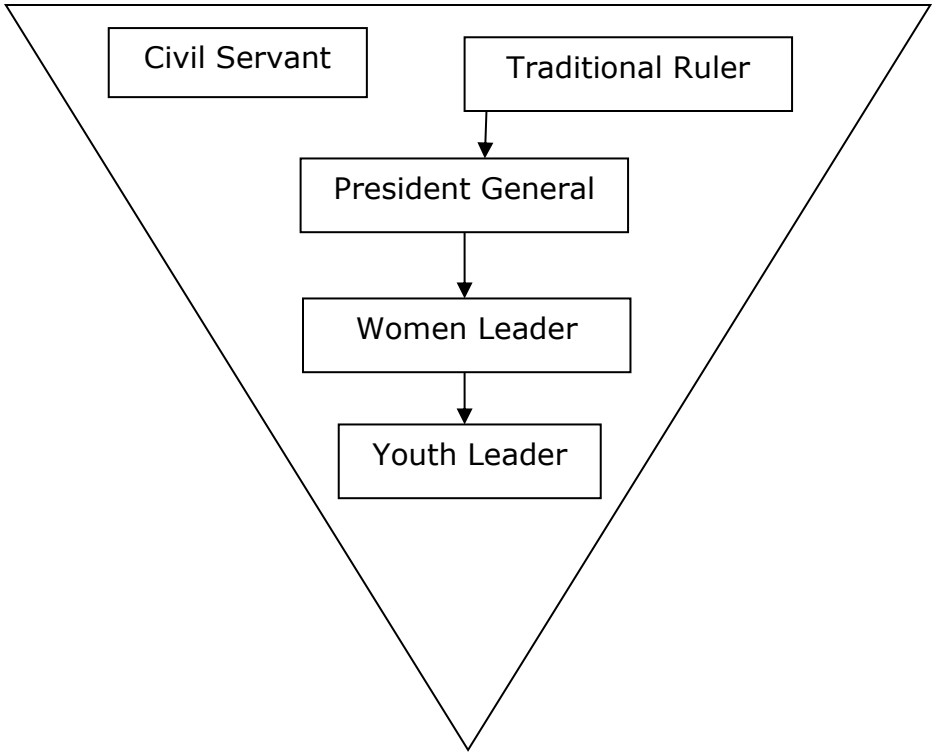
President General: The President General is the next in line after the Traditional Ruler. He works together with the Traditional Ruler and represents the community in most official meetings with the state government (PART XIII the Autonomous Community Councils Administration Law No. 1 of 2012). He must be an indigene of the community but different from the village of the Traditional Ruler.

The Women Leader: The Women Leader represents the affairs of the women in the community council. She must be an indigene and financial member of the community and must have attained the age of 25 and knows how to read and write.

The Youth Leader: The Youth Leader as a member manages the affairs of the youths must be an indigene and a financial member of the community. His duty is to see that the youths are carried along in the CGC.

A Career Civil Servant: The career civil servant is a representative of the state government appointed by the state governor (PART XIII of the Autonomous Community Councils Administration Law No. 1 of 2012). He is also called the Community Liaison Officer (CLO). He must be an indigene of the community and nominated by the Governor which must be confirmed by the State House of Assembly (Autonomous Community Councils Administration Law No. 1 of 2012).

Fig 3: Diagrammatical representation of the structure of CGC



Source: Okorafor, I. (2019).

There are many problems affecting Community Government Councils.

These include:

1. **Poor finance:** Finance is the live wire of every government. Inadequate funding therefore hinders the activities of the CGC. This is because of the inability of the state government to release adequate funds for project implementation in the communities. The decades of development funding has demonstrated the failures of top-down approach to development, making most projects to suffer from lack of sustainability and this can be accounted for by lack of participation (Kwaja, 2004). Community

participation therefore, is relevant for certain action: first to ensure accountability and transparency, increase local self-reliance, ensure the development that reflects peoples' needs and preference, ensure a sense of belonging, responsibility and peoples' support for planning, execution and evaluation of development projects (Idode, 1989). However, some grassroot communities are poor and could not raise enough funds on their own which is required for community projects (Eze, 1999). This could be because of the level of poverty in the rural communities or the people's unwillingness to pay their dues and many others.

2. **Excessive control by the government:** PART XIII of the Autonomous Community Councils Administration Law No. 1 of 2012 captioned Supervisory Powers of Local Government states that the Local Government shall exercise supervisory power over the community councils within its area of jurisdiction. It has power to set up a panel of inquiry and investigate any form of misconduct in the duties of the community government involving bribery, corruption, inefficiency, and misappropriation of public funds, abuse of office, or a violation of the provision of the law establishing it. The report of such inquiry shall be forwarded to the House of Assembly for action within one (1) week of its conclusion. It is obvious that the government maintains excessive control of the affairs and activities of the CGC (Uhegbu, 2017). This leaves the Chairman to be taking orders from the politicians instead of making use of the initiatives of his team members. Although the CGC is made up of the Traditional Ruler, the President General, the Women Leader and the Youth Leader who are all members of the community, the execution of policies and disbursement of funds are carried out by the civil servant, thereby leaving the CGC officials redundant.
3. **Lack of democratic selection/participation:** Commenting on the legitimacy and acceptability enjoyed by democratic leaders, Izueke (2011 cited in Okorafor 2019 remarks that local participation is highest where there are democratic structure but the constitution of the CGC in Imo State fails in democratic standards (Okorafor 2019). The resultant effect of this failure is people's unwillingness to support the CGC, making the officials and the officers to become unpopular and unacceptable among the people.
4. **Lack of cooperation by the town unions:** Before the advent of the CGC, there had been the town unions. The town has shouldered the burden of the government and development of the rural communities in Imo State for decades and replacing them with the CGC was not a welcome development by many town union leaders (Ibe, 2019). This made the officials of the town unions to disregard the CGC and treated it with levity. This is the case in Orji autonomous community where we have Onungaono (mainly the old town union), and the new CGC loyalists.
5. **Lack of adequate information:** As it is often said, knowledge is power. It is also amazing that there is no knowledge without information as knowledge is acquired through information. The CGC most times lack adequate information which could have equipped them to perform better. They do not receive adequate and timely

information from the state government which could have helped them to perform better.

6. **Lack of structures:** At the time of the inauguration of the CGC, Governor Okorocha warned that each community must meet the requirements that certify a people to be a community. One of these requirements is an administrative unit of up to ten (10) rooms (Asinugo, 2013). But it is regrettable that many autonomous communities got the CGC status without meeting this important criterion. Many CGC officials in some communities had nowhere to operate from thereby reducing the value and importance of the CGC.
7. **Lack of accountability:** For any administrative set up to function effectively and attain its objectives, there must be adequate measures for proper accountability. Without accountability, officials will grow wild and see the organization as their private property where they do whatever that seems right to them. Accountability is answerability for one's actions or behaviour (Okorafor, 2019). People must be made to answer for their actions. This will help to reduce impunity and leads the nation to prosperity and sustainable development. Although there were check on how to bring CGC officials to answer for their wrongs, yet such measures were not applauded thereby creating an atmosphere of impunity and recklessness.
8. **Community conflict:** A conflict is a state of friction or disagreement between individuals or groups in society. Conflict as it is known is prevalent in our communities. There exists conflicts of interests, ideas or values and where not properly managed could frustrate the efforts of the people in the community creating disunity, lack of trust and non cooperation among community members (Okorafor, 2019). But peace and harmony are instrumental to development and a good measure of social well-being. Most communities in Imo have been conflict ridden possibly as a result of Ezeship tussle, financial control and many others. This has frustrated the noble efforts of the CGC in such communities.

Community Government Councils and Primary Health Care

When the government is very near to the people at the rural communities, it helps to improve the health sector through primary health care (Nwarieji & Ifeanyieze, 2016). During its inception, the Imo State government planned to build primary health care facilities at different autonomous communities. This objective was achieved in only 19 percent of the communities as at 2017. The communities that benefited have improved the health care of their citizens. Primary Health Care according to the World Health Organization (1978) is defined as essential health care based on practical, scientifically sound, and socially acceptable methods and technology made accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation and at a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain in the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination. This leads to primary health care services which refer to the provision of primary health care, which includes preventive health services and education. Primary health care entails free, affordable and acceptable healthcare for everyone

in the rural community with the aim to provide and make adequate health care available for all the people. This is to make sure all rural dwellers have quality health care to carry out their day-to-day activities for the development of their rural communities (Obi, 2019).

It was based on this that the government of former Governor Rochas Okorocha through the community government worked hard to provide primary health care in Imo rural communities. Before the advent of the Okorocha Administration, and the CGC, many rural communities had no health centres and therefore had no timely access to quality health care. For example, the people of Umuchima community in Ideato South LGA had no community health care centre until the coming of the CGC when one was built for them. The people rejoiced and witnessed that before then, there had been high maternal and infant mortality recorded in the area (Channels TV News, 2017). Existing health centres in Imo rural communities lacked doctors, beds, drugs, nurses, chemical tools, scientists, etc. This made them to be shunned by women. Through the CGC, 27 health centres were renovated, while 10 new ones were built.

Community Government Council and Rural Road Maintenance

Maintenance of rural roads goes a long way to ease the challenges of road transportation which contributes immensely to rural development. As it is known, agriculture is the major occupation of the rural communities. Over 90% of rural dwellers have agriculture as their major occupation. From these agricultural activities come huge agricultural produce. These agricultural produce are majorly sent by road transport to the urban areas where they are sold to urban dwellers. Such agricultural produce are used as food for people, feed for animals and raw materials for industries. Some of these produce are also exported to foreign countries which serve as a source of revenue for the government through export taxes on the products. Since agriculture occupies this lofty position in the rural communities and the national economy, it is important to provide adequate road infrastructure for rural people not only to convey their agricultural produce to the cities, but to also have access to other areas of interest to carry out their day-to-day activities.

To this end, the Rochas Okorocha administration through the community government aimed to rehabilitate and improve the roads in the state, especially those in the rural areas. Before the establishment of community government in 2011, most roads in the rural areas were totally in bad shape. Some of the roads in the rural areas were not tarred with asphalt while the tarred ones had worn out. Most roads in the rural communities were not motor-able during the rainy season because they were not graded or maintained during the dry season as was done in the past. But through the CGC, relief came for the rural people. Through the CGC, many roads were graded and maintained. In the month of December, 2018, the state government released the sum of Two Million Naira each to all 637 autonomous communities in the state for grading and maintenance of their community roads. This led to the rehabilitation of many rural roads as journeys to the cities and other neighbouring communities were made easier.

The rehabilitation and construction of roads also led to peaceful settlement of community disputes because the Governor made it mandatory that before any community accesses their money, they must make sure that their community had no outstanding dispute. This was

basically to know which road to construct to avoid divergent interest (Vanguard Online, 2016). Through the CGC also, the state government constructed and tarred with asphalt the roads leading to the Ezes of the autonomous communities in the state. This helped to increase the number of constructed roads in the state even though most of the roads were of poor quality. Globally, transportation has contributed to the development of many countries as any nation without effective system may not develop properly (Pat-Mbano & Okeoma, 2010). Corroborative to the above assertion, transportation has enormous impact on development as an immobile nation is a poor nation. Transportation plays a very important role in the life of every society. When roads linking the rural areas to the urban areas are tarred, rural farmers will have access to convey their agricultural produce to the cities for sale thereby providing food for city dwellers. Pat-Mbano & Okeoma 2010), observed that lack of good roads in Imo State rural areas affected agricultural development and food distribution. But unfortunately, most of the rural roads in Imo State are poor and not motorable. This has greatly hindered mobility in the rural areas especially in the rainy seasons. When roads are in good conditions, rural dwellers can have access to the cities to carry out their activities.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Uhegbu (2017) focused on the impact of rural information on community development programmes in the Imo State of Nigeria. By the combination of a questionnaire and an oral interview schedule, the impact of grassroot information dissemination on community development programmes in Imo State was established. A total of 378 respondents were chosen from 63 autonomous communities drawn randomly from the 27 local government areas of the state. Data were analysed using simple percentage. The results show that grassroot information has accelerated self-help development consciousness of the rural dwellers. Various social, economic, cultural and health projects have been accomplished as a result. A number of factors constraining grassroot information dissemination in Imo State were identified.

Also, Ajaero (2013) examined the effects of community government on rural-urban migration in Southeastern Nigeria. Data were obtained using mixed methods approach comprising questionnaire surveys and key informant interviews. Six rural local government areas (LGAs) were selected based on population size and spatial equity from two states of Southeastern Nigeria. From each of the rural LGAs, fifty migrant-sending households were sampled for the study. Multiple regression and hierarchical cluster analyses were used to estimate and categorize the effects of rural-urban migration due to remittances and community projects executed by the rural-urban migrants, respectively. In addition, the Chi-square and Kruskal-Wallis tests were utilized. The regression analysis shows that poor community government and development leads to rural-urban migration. Based on the findings, recommendations such as initiation of development projects based on the identified needs of each of the rural communities to augment the effects of migration in the study area were made.

Moreover, Nosiri and Nwachukwu (2018) analyzed the people's perception of the role of community government council in community participation and development in rural

communities of Imo State. The main objectives of this work were to ascertain the extent the CGC has contributed to development in rural communities in Imo State and the factors undermining the operation of CGC for community participation and development in Imo State. This study used primary source like questionnaire instrument to collect data from the respondents. The mean score with four point likert scale and simple percentage statistical method were used to analyze the data collected. Based on the analysis, it was discovered that the activities of CGC have not adequately contributed towards enhancing community participation and development in rural communities in Imo State. And, certain factors like poor funding, poor staff, excessive state government control, corruption and desire to acquire political power etc undermined the operation of CGC in Imo State. This work recommended for provision of adequate funding, strengthening of local government system, more encouragement of mass participation than reliance on public bureaucracy, reintroduction and encouragement of Town Unions and other community based organization etc.

Not only that, Nwarieji & Ifeanyieze (2016) focused on challenges associated with the implementation of unified agricultural extension Services (UAES) programme in Imo State. Specific objectives were to determine the administrative, financial and logistic challenges associated with the implementation of UAES programme. Three research questions guided the study. Null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance. The study adopted survey (descriptive) design and was conducted in Imo State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 22,988 comprising of 22,880 farmers and 108 extension agents in the study area. Total samples of 336 were used consisting of 226 contact farmers and 108 extension agents. The instrument for data collection was Structured Questionnaire complemented by the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide. The questionnaire comprised items arranged in clusters. The instrument was face validated by five experts and the internal consistency of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha method which yielded the reliability coefficients of 0.70. The instruments were administered through personal contacts with the help of six assistants. The data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics. Information collected from the focus group discussion was qualitatively analyzed. The findings of the study revealed that administrative constraints include inadequate market for disposing farm produce, poor coordination of activities of farmers, inadequate training of extension staff; financial constraints include high cost of adoption of technology, inadequate finance; and logistics constraints include low level of education, use of traditional implements were the challenges associated with implementation of UAES programme. Based on the findings of the study, conclusions were drawn and recommendations made which include among others the need for adequate provision of agricultural inputs at a subsidized rate and training of extension agents for effective implementation of UAES programme in order sustain agricultural production in Imo State, Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, the researcher used vacuum-filling theory.

The Vacuum-Filling Theory

This theory was propounded by Ugwulebo in 2003. However, Ikechi (2006) was the first to utilize the theory in development studies. He believed the vacuum existed between the planned development policies and the actual policy implementation. According to Ugwulebo (2003), vacuum – filling theory aims at explicating and bringing to bear why people (especially those in high places) behave the way they do. In other words, the theory wants to unearth what these people do not want to say but have as the foundation bedrocks of their policies. It aims at looking at the reasons behind the offered reason or reason guiding certain actions. Invariably, this theory is a system of articulated thoughts and thinking aloud for those concerned. The vacuum-filling theory can be used to explain the various reasons for different government policies and action, including the establishment of CGC by the Rochas Okorocha administration.

According to Ibe (2019), the major tenants of the theory are:

1. There is usually a gap or difference between what people (especially leaders and government) promise and what they actually do.
2. On assumption of office (by leaders), there is a gap between what the leaders promise the people on how CGC will be used to transform Imo State and what they actually do in practical.
3. There is also a gap in what people of Imo State need and what is provided (in terms of development).
4. The promises made to the masses heighten expectations which are usually dashed with reckless impunity on assumption of office.

Vacuum – filling theory was employed as the framework of analysis in this study. This is true because the theory focused on the need to understand the behavior and inconsistent way of life of our political and economic leaders (including government institutions). In this direction, CGC was established as a government institution to enhance infrastructural and manpower development in Imo State. During the time of its establishment, the government stated its pragmatic vision on transforming the Imo State communities through CGC. Also, on regular basis, during the inauguration of the leaders of CGC, such appointees of government (Traditional rural, liaison officers, president general, youth leaders, women leaders, and others) normally gave numerous promises on how they will transform both human capital and infrastructure in their rural communities. However, there is a very big vacuum between what these leaders promised and their practical performance in office. There is also a very big vacuum between the "said" goal of establishing CGC and the goal accomplished through CGC; hence the issue of vacuum – filling theory. The above stipulates that CGC as a government institution has not actually performed its functions as it ought to be in enhancing rural development in Imo State.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was the need to take development to the rural communities that the Imo state government in 2011 introduced the "Community Government Council". The government desired that the

Community Government Council (CGC) would facilitate active community participation in governance and ensure adequate attention to the development needs and expectations of the people. This would enable rural communities feel the impact of government in the development of their areas. The CGC would also help for the development of the rural communities by reducing poverty, improving health care, and providing infrastructure and emancipate rural communities from the influence of ignorance/illiteracy. However, the community government council has not achieved these goals, hence poor primary health services, and poor rural road maintenance. On the basis of the above, this study recommends that;

1. The current Imo State government should empower community government councils to provide rural health services.
2. The governments at the state and local government council should encourage the community government through finance to enable them maintain rural roads.

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