

## Financing Poverty Reduction Programmes in Rural Areas of Nigeria: The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

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### Abstract

This study investigated the operations of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in relation to the socio-economic development of rural areas in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Abiakpo in Obot Akara, Four Towns in Onna, and Okpo Ndua Erong in Ibesikpo Asutan were selected for the study. The study elicited data from 1250 respondents who were purposively and randomly selected from the four rural communities. The data were subjected to analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical technique at 0.05 level of significance with 1248 degrees of freedom. Results revealed that NGOs contribute immensely to rural development in Akwa Ibom State in the areas of health, education, economic and job creation. It was recommended among others were made that NGOs in Nigeria should incorporate their activities with that of government to avoid duplication of functions and that NGOs should adopt participatory approach to encourage active rural involvement in development project.

**Keyword:** Social and Economic development, Non-governmental Organizations.

### Introduction

The wave of poverty, economic backwardness, dearth of infrastructure, health problem, unemployment, and natural disaster in rural and urban areas are currently some of the most serious problems in the world. Over 1.5 billion people of the world's population live below the poverty line of one dollar per day; out of which 250 million people are from Sub-Saharan African (UNDP, 2008; Agba, Ushie, Ushie, Bassey & Agba 2009). The Federal Office of Statistics report indicated that about 15 per cent of Nigerians in 1969 were poor; this number increased to 28 percent in 1980 and in 1985, it was 46 percent but dropped to 43 in 1992. The estimated incidence of poverty in 1996 was 66million out of 120 million Nigerians. It was also reported in 2003 that 41.6 percent of Nigerians are poor, of which majority are in rural communities (Aliyu, 2003).

As hunger, disease, outbreak of wars, incidence of kidnapping, natural disaster and massive poverty ravage the Nigerian Federation, government, international agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are leaving no stone unturned in fighting these social monster (Mohammed, 1991, Akpanudoedehe, 2006; Agba, Agba, Okoro & Agba, 2010). Just as globalization and international trade affects societies, NGOs have become increasingly influential in world affairs. They have become major players in the field of international development. Since the mid-1970s, NGOs in both developed and developing countries has



experienced exponential growth. From 1970 to 1985 development aid disbursed by international NGOs increased by ten-fold. In 1992, international NGOs channeled over 7.6 billion us dollars of aid to developing countries. NGOs are also consulted by governments and international organizations like; the United Nations (UN), which have created associative status with them (World Bank 2001; Akpanudoedehe, 2006). NGOs are not directly affiliated with any government but often have a significant impact on the socio-economic and political activity of the country or region involved. They are private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interest of the poor, protect the environment, provide development programme. NGOs are non-profit organizations that are independent from government. They are typically value-based organization, which depend in whole or in part on charitable donations and voluntary services It was estimated that, the number of NGOs are somewhere between 6000 and 30,000 in developing countries (World Bank 2001:14; Akpanudoedehe, 2006).

In Nigeria, the network of NGOs is in the increase since the 1980s; and in recent decades, NGOs are networking with national and international agencies, with the aim of meeting national economic empowerment development strategy (NEEDS) and the millennium development goals (MDGs) by 2015. Specifically, NGOs in Nigeria contribute to national development in the areas of democracy and good governance, poverty alleviation, women developed, primary healthcare, STDs/AIDS and other health related matters, education and functional literacy, the development of the girl child, environment, conflict resolution, drug abuse and human rights (Akpanudoedehe, 2006). Despite government and NGOs efforts, human development index in the Nigeria especially in rural areas is far below countries like Kenya, Ghana and South Africa (UNDP, 2008: Agba, Ushie, Bassey & Agba, 2009). This may be because over 15 percent of total overseas development aid channel through NGOs are notoriously implemented (World Bank, 2001) or that NGOs are not sensitive to the felt needs of Nigerians. The concern of these study therefore is to investigate the extent to which NGOs in Nigeria are contributing to rural transformation especially in the areas of economic, job creation, health and educational in development Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria.

### **Study Area**

Situated in the South-Eastern axis of Nigeria, Akwa Ibom State lies between latitudes 4<sup>0</sup> 32 and 5<sup>0</sup> 53 North, and longitude 7<sup>0</sup> 25 and 8<sup>0</sup> 25 East. The state shares boundaries with Cross River State in the North and East, while in the South-West by Rivers and Abia states respectively. Akwa Ibom State has an oceanfront, which spans a distance of 129 kilometers from Ikot Abasi Local Government Area to Oron Local Government Area (Ekpoh, 1994). The state occupies an area of 8,412 square kilometers and lies within the tropical zone, with two main seasons – dry and rainy season.

Akwa Ibom State is densely populated with an average density of 695.53 persons per square kilometer. The state was created in 1987 with ten local government areas; today it has 31 local government areas with Uyo Municipality as its headquarters. The people of Akwa Ibom State constitute a homogenous growth with aw common ancestral stock. Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Ibeno, Andoni and Eket constitute the major languages of the state. Akwa Ibom State is the largest producer of crude oil in Nigeria, despite this economic advantage, majority of its people are poor especially in rural areas; most communities lack basic infrastructure, and where the exits they are obsolete or in a very bad shape (Akpanudoedehe, 2006).



## Literature and Empirical Survey

### Social and Economic Development

Social development is concerned with the transformation of society in its totality, making human the focus of the development effort and seeking to develop its potentialities in a total sense. More specifically, it aims ultimately at the maximum improvement of the material, cultural, social and political aspects. Social development embraces programmes and activities, which enhance the capacities of members of society to fulfill existing and changing social roles expectations and accomplish their various personal goals. It entails the democratization of the development process and the orientation of development effort to the needs and interest of the masses. It ensures equitable sharing in the benefits and burdens of development, the recovery of self-confidence and delineation (ACARTSD, 1980:7-9).

More concretely, social development involves comprehensive human resources development; raising living standards and quality of life, improving health and human welfare, ensuring social justice and equality, and providing adequate social security for all segments of the population (ECA, 1985:11). Social development include- reduction or elimination of poverty, equitable distribution of income and wealth, employment creation, health and nutrition, education and training, housing and ancillary services, social security and welfare (Mohammed, 1991:20).

Unfortunately, Africa lacks behind in terms of social development. Families and individuals in absolute poverty are found in Sub-Sahara African the greatest concentration are in the least development countries of Africa. Out of 1.5 billion people that are poor the world over, more than 250 million, which is about 17 percent are from Africa (Aliyu, 2003). The situation is not better in Nigeria, inequality in the distribution of income and wealth widen social gaps between the poor and the rich. Consequently, unemployment, poverty, social insecurity, illiteracy, and health problems are very obvious in rural and urban areas (Aliyu, 2003; Agba, Ushie & Agba, 2007; Agba, Ushie, Bassey & Agba 2009).

Economic development on the other hand entails economic improvement; it includes advancing technology to increase the productivity of labour. It involves the complete modernization of peasant society into an industrial one. It includes expanding people's freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables in terms of goods and services. It implies creating conditions conducive for the growth of people's self-esteem, through the establishment of economic institutions, which promote human dignity and respect (Todaro, 1977). Economic development entails addressing the problem of unemployment, poverty and inequality in society.

Social and economic development is therefore a multidimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. It is change and advancement. It implies progress and economic advancement. It involves raising people's income and consumptions levels through relevant economic growth process (Todaro, 1977; Mohammed, 1991).

### **Antecedence of Rural Development in Nigeria**

Rural transformation is a process of increasing not only the level of per capita income in rural sector, but also the standard of living of the rural population (Diejomaoh, 1973:73). According to Fisk (1972) cited in Abasiekon (1982:1):

There aims of rural development are not solely, not even primarily, economic. Rural development is not just a matter of increasing money incomes, though this must unquestionably play some part. It is not increasing production, though substantial increase in some rural production will certainly be required. It is not even solely rural, for the rural sector must contribute to national requirements, producing a surplus of food and raw materials for secondary and tertiary industry, for export to pay for essential imports and a contribution to the revenue of central as well as local governments.

Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social conditions of specific group of people that is the rural poor (World Bank, 1975). It involves improving living standards of low-income people residing in rural areas and making the process of their self-sustaining (Lele, 1975).

Although rural communities in time past engaged in self-help projects, like communal training, markets, village squares, village halls, road construction etc, modern approach or strategy to rural development in Nigeria started in the 1920s by the British Colonial government. Since then, several development efforts have been geared towards accelerating the pace of transformation in rural communities (Ebong, 1991). The antecedence of rural development in Nigeria was further widen owing to the rapid changes from the country's independence in October 1960, one of which is the fast losing of traditional functions of rural areas to provide all the food required for consumption in towns, because most imported food were serving as substitutes. Consequently, retail and market centers in rural areas declined. The lack of attractive job opportunities and the virtual lack of social and public facilities in most rural areas caused a continuous drift of young rural population to urban areas in search for employment. This situation forced the then Eastern Nigeria Government to look into agriculture as a recipe to the problem of rural-urban migration and rural unemployment. Farm settlements were established to raise the standard of living and to divert attention of rural areas. The farm settlement scheme developed new farming communities trained in the most modern and scientific techniques. The scheme ushered in a new positive attitude towards farming which generated an increase on the overall agricultural produce in the then Eastern Region. It also created employment opportunities for an expanding rural population (Owuamalam, 1981).

To achieve the objective of transforming our rural communities government embarked upon a number of laudable programmes/project which include among others – farms settlement scheme for school leavers, River Basin and Rural Development Authorities; Better Life for Rural Women, Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Directorate for Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (Agba, Ushie, Ushie, Bassey & Agba, 2009). These efforts yielded little or no success because of corruption (Ndubusi, 1991; Ottong 2006), lack of active participation of the masses (World Bank, 1996), lack of continuity of government programmes among others (Agba, Ushie & Agba, 2007).

## NGOs and Rural Development in Nigeria

### a. NGOs and Environmental Protection, Human Rights, Reconciliation and Peace

NGOs have remarkably done well in the areas of environmental human rights protection; reconciliation and peace in Nigeria. For instance, Environmental Right Action (ERA) and Friends of the Earth International (FEI), is impacting very much in the environment of the Niger Delta Region through her campaign in the following areas: reducing greenhouse-gas emission, reducing oil spillage, improving oil exploitation technologies, environmental education and awareness, ensuring environmental law enforcement and conservation of nature. ERA and FEI embarked on multidisciplinary programmes that encourage technology innovation, safety compliance, pollution prevention, community outreach, conservation, advocacy and training (Ajaero, 2005).

Nigerian Conservation Foundations (NCF) works closely with oil multinational such as Chevron, Shell to ensure environmental safety in host communities. NCF activities aides Chevrons wildlife and preservation programme and has protected threatened species in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria (Chevron, 2005). In terms of peace, Niger Delta Peace Foundation (NDPF) is dedicated to reconciliation and development of the Niger Delta region. NDPF had over the years negotiated between the Ogoni people in the Niger Delta, the Federal Government of Nigeria and oil multinationals. In 2005, several efforts were made by NDPF to bring Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), the Ogoni people and the Federal Government to dialogue as to reach lasting solution to their face-off, which emanated from SPDC exploitation of crude oil in the region (Ebahor, 2005).

On child/human rights, Ray of Hope Foundation (RHF) is a notable NGO that had achieved tremendously in this regard. RHF in many instances, called for the implementation of the Child's Rights Act, which was signed into law by the former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in 2003. The RHF also embarked on back-to-school programme for street children. So far, hundreds of street children have benefited from the programme, and the organization is still making effort to place an average of 35 percent of street children in various schools in Lagos State (Scokunbi, 2006).

### b. NGOs and Health Provision

Health is wealth, and health is one way NGOs are creating wealth in Nigeria. The scourge of HIV/AIDS in the country propelled NGOs' activities in the areas of prevention and enlightenment programmes. UNAIDS in collaboration with NGOs across African including Nigeria, embarked on a programme called – World AIDS Campaign with Young People (UNAIDS, 1999). The programme placed the issue of HIV/AIDS among young people on national and international agendas, and has brought significant attention to the force for change that young represent in reversing the course of the epidemic especially in rural areas. It raised the profile of young people in the discussions about HIV/AIDS, and increased their participation in events, programmes and decision-making bodies (Pilot, 1999).

NGOs are also involved in the protection of rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. About 200 NGOs were involved in such operations in 1997. Human right NGOs have been

at the forefront of setting standards for human rights and of promoting and protecting those rights. The role and tasks of the United Nations in the field of human rights is greatly enhanced by the generous input of NGOs. In 1997, NGOs in collaboration with the United Nations Human Right Committee (UNHRC) addressed issues such as non-discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS, protection of families of infected persons, right of those living with HIV/AIDS to participation in political and public life at national and international levels, right to privacy among others (UNAIDS, 1997).

In Cross River State, Civil Society on HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (CISHAN) partnered with the state government on the campaign against the spray of HIV/AIDS. In this regards, CISHAN has since 2003 recorded significant milestone in the State. Its activities include among others advocating for treatment centres, mapping and validation strategic framework (MVSF) on HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (Uneze, 2005).

A recent declaration by World Health Organization (WHO) that more than 5 million were suffering from diabetes informed United Kingdom based NGO, Saint Patrick Diabetic Association (SPDA) to establish a diabetes counseling office in Nigeria. SPDA is also creating public awareness on dietary disorder, which is a silent killer if left unattended. SPDA established a mobile clinic deployed to service rural areas in Nigeria (Odittah, 2005).

**c. NGOs and Educational Development**

Education remains the most vital tool for rural transformation in Nigeria; surprisingly there were very few schools in Nigeria especially in rural areas that can genuinely claim to have adequate school physical facilities for teaching and learning (Akomolafe, 2001; Ofoegbu, 2001). Scholarship are not adequate, many student drop out of school because of finance. This is an indication that government alone cannot adequately fund education (Sowunimi, 2004). This precarious situation of the education system especially in rural communities, informed the intervention of NGOs. In response to this, Courage Education Foundation (CEF) gave scholarship to children whose parent cannot afford basic primary education in Nigeria. In Gbagada, Lagos State CEF awarded Scholarship to 12 children whose parents cannot afford basic primary education. CEF scholarship is open to all members of the public especially rural dwellers who are less privileged (Kamanu, 2004).

Girls Power Initiative (GPI) is another NGO that is transforming the Nigerian educational system. GPI established libraries in the South-South and South-East Geographical Zones. These libraries provides services to adolescent girls especially the less privileged. GPI also run counseling units throughout these zones for adolescent girls. Between July 1999 and March 2006, GPI graduated hundreds of adolescent girls in her schools. Most of their graduates were trained on how to read and write, health, humanities and different skills for easy employment (Ikpi, 1999; Utak, 2003).

International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH) in partnership with Chevron Nigeria Limited provided basic education for primary school children, adult literacy classes, and training for primary school teachers. Specifically their objective include – training approximately 1,000 youths for self-employment, provision of basic education for primary school children, adult literacy classes as well as the provision of basic business skills and small business credit access (ChevronTexaco, 2003).



**d. NGOs and Economic Development**

The philosophy of economic transformation, wealth and job creation dominate the activities of most NGOs the world over. This involves around the economic principle that poverty can effectively be eradicated if people are economically buoyant. According to Chevron (2003), acute unemployment is a fact of life in remote communities in Delta State, Nigeria. Consequently, Chevron in partnership with IFESH created technical skill acquisition centre in Warri, Delta State. The centre at provided community youths with self-sustaining job, and skills; the project offers a full year training in metal work, computer processing and office support in preparation for starting a business or finding a job.

NGOs interventions in job creation and economic transformation of rural and urban communities had alleviated the suffering of some rural dwellers in Imo State, Nigeria. Network of Non-Governmental Organizations (NNNGO) programme on economic and social empowerment of rural communities established poultry farms and trained women for self-employment. Similarly, Ohonyeta Care Group otherwise known as solution NGO gave out micro-credit facilities to rural dweller to aid people start business and reduce the scourge of poverty in Nigeria (Kanu, 2003).

Lift Above Poverty Organization (LAPO) in Udi Aken Community bought and commissioned cassava-processing machines in 1996. LAPO also promoted self-employment in small income-generating activities through micro-credits facilities with the belief is that, credit is a vital and potent weapon for fighting poverty in rural areas. LAPO credit facilities were given to income generating activities such as petty trading, tailoring, food processing, and farming. The loan has very low interest rate and guaranteed by other members of the group (Chiazor, 2002).

In Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, Community Partners for Development (CPD) building partnership at various levels in collaborative efforts to provide a more integrated form of intervention for development in its operational communities. Specifically CPD objectives include among others to – strengthen organizational capacity of partner groups, increase access to credit and income generating opportunities for members of rural communities, ensure the empowerment of women, provide services and information dissemination on issues that enhances the development of society, enhance individual sources of livelihood as well as ensure financial sustainability of community development projects (CPD, 2005).

Since its establishment in 1997, CPD had embarked on a number of projects ranging from micro credit scheme, integrated rural healthcare, enlightenment and youth programmes, as well as gender issues. CPD organizes integrated micro project for the poorest in Akwa Ibom State. CPD uses economic empowerment and poverty alleviation programmes to address the issue of poverty in rural communities in Akwa Ibom State. Its credit scheme is built out of the existing traditional saving and loans system (Osusu). This loan aimed at providing and enhancing individual source of livelihood, as well as harnesses the efforts of communities and affords them alternative income generating source (CPD, 2005).

Also, the establishment and licensing of micro finance institutions such as the micro finance banks in both urban and rural communities help to reduce the impact of poverty on the rural community through the provision of soft loans to finance small scale industries thus

encouraging skill acquisitions and job creation for the ever increasing number of unemployed graduates.

### **Theoretical Consideration**

This study adopted Kenneth Kaunda's Humanism theory. The theory emanated from the works of Kenneth Kaunda a onetime President of Zambia. Kaunda a humanism ideology came out of his keen interest in promoting the welfare of the people of the Zambia. He held that, Africa society was progressive and human; that the present generation of Africans must bear this in mind in all their political, economic, social and cultural activities. Kaunda held that, whatever changes that take place in the society, whatever sacrifices that are made by government, it agencies and other organizations (including NGOs), in the task of fighting to preserve the man-centered society, the government and other organizations must remember that it is "people above ideology and man above institutions". They should promote activities that placed man at the centre of all human activity (Damachi, 1976).

Humanism according to Kaunda is egalitarianism. It stipulates that certain things in life should not be rationed by money or power. He argued that things like education, health service, other socio-economic and political variables should not go to the highest bidder, but that all people have a moral right to equal opportunities (Kaunda, 1967).

From Kaunda's theory, development especially "rural development" is seen from the human angle; where institutions such as education, agriculture, health, economic, politic, social including NGOs are established to better the lot of the people. Development is a holistic activity, which must reach the rural as well as urban dwellers. Thus any development that does not reach the common man especially those in rural areas, that does not encourage equitable distribution of goods and services, that does not promote the general well-being of the people cannot be regarded as development. NGOs are such bodies that provide services to the generality of the people of Africa at little or no cost. NGOs render service to the public especially the poor of the earth who are dominant in rural areas at no cost. They ensure the equitable distribution of goods and services, and serve as the voice of the hopeless. In the ideas of Kaunda, NGOs are human centered and thus places man's welfare at the centre of its activities.

### **Methodology**

The study adopts survey design, because it uncovered data, interpret, synthesize and integrate data, as well as point to their implication in interrelationships (Cohen & Manion, 1986). It allows for random sampling and the use of questionnaires. It is also used to study people attitude, feelings and opinions (Babbie, 1985). A sample of three selected communities was used for the study. These communities are – Abiakpo in Obot Akara Local Government Area, Okop Ndua Erong in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area and Four Towns in Onna Local Government Area. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used in selecting 1250 respondents for the study.

Data was elicited from respondent using a four point Likert scale questionnaire. The question was divided into two major sections. Section A, was the demographic variables of respondents. Section B accorded the study the needed topical data on the impact of NGOs operations on rural transformation in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Items in the four point Likert

scale with positive response were ranked 4, 3, 2, 1, with 4 standing for strongly agree (SA), 3 for agree (A), 2 for disagree (D), 1 for strongly disagree (SD). On the other hand, items that shows dislike were ranked from 1 to 4, with 4 standing for strongly disagree (SD), 3 for disagree (D) 2 for agree (A) and 1 for strongly agree (SA). Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to analyze elicited data.

## Results

### Demographic Data of Respondents

As depicted in table 1 majority of the respondents were male, 44 percent were female. Fifty percent were below 40 years, within this age bracket, 60 percent were male while 40 percent were female. The age description of respondents also revealed that, 40 percent were between the ages of 41 and 50 years, while 10 percent were 51 years and above. Forty four percent of the respondents were single, 48 per cents were married. Four percent and another four percent were separated and divorced respectively (see table 1).

Table 1 shows that 16 of the respondents had First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC), of which 42 percent were female while 58 percent were male. The study also revealed that 40 percent of the respondents have Senior School Certificate of Education (SSCE), of which 63 percent were male while 37 percent were female. Furthermore, the study revealed that 24 percent were NCE holders, 68 percent of this group was male, and 32 percent were female. Twenty percent of the respondents had university education, of which 47 percent were female and 53 percent were male.

### Hypothesis I

There is no significant relationship between NGOs activities and health development in rural communities. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r). Table 2 revealed that, the calculated r value of 0.567 is greater than the critical  $r = 0.062$  at 0.05 level of significant and at 1248 degree of freedom. This shows that, there is a significant relationship between NGOs activities and health development in rural communities in Akwa Ibom State. This findings is consistent with Pilot (1999), UNAIDS (1999), Chiazor (2002), Kanu (2003), Ojo (2003), Chevron (2003), Uneze (2005), CPD (2005) and Njiogu (2006), who observes that NGOs operations accelerates health development in rural communities.

### Hypothesis II

A NGOs operation does not significantly influence rural economic development in Akwa Ibom State. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Table 3 revealed that, the calculated r-value of 0.560 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.19 at 0.062 levels of significance and 1248 degree of freedom. This analysis shows that, NGOs operations significantly influence rural economic development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This finding corroborates Chiazor (2002), Chevron (2003) and Kanu (2003) who posits that NGOs activities enhance rural economic development.

### Hypothesis III

The development of education in rural communities is not significantly related to NGOs activities in Akwa Ibom State. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation ( $r$ ). As depicted in table 4, the calculated  $r$  of 0.800\* is greater than the critical  $r$ -value of 0.062 at 0.05 level of significance with 1248 degree of freedom. This shows that, there is a significant relationship between the development of education in rural communities and the operations of NGOs in Akwa Ibom State. This finding is consistent with the views of Ikpi (1999) and Sowunimi (2004), who posits that NGOs activities has strong impact on education development in rural communities.

### Hypothesis IV

There is no significant relationship between NGOs operations and job creation in rural communities in Akwa Ibom State. Pearson Product Moment Correlation ( $r$ ) was used in the analysis. Findings as depicted in table 5 revealed that the calculated  $r$ -value of 0.964 is greater than the  $r$ -critical of 0.062 at 0.05 level of significance and 1248 degree of freedom. This shows that NGOs activities significantly influence job creation in rural communities in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This finding corroborates Chiazor (2002), Kanu (2003) and Chevron (2003), who observes that NGOs activities impact positively on job creation in rural areas.

### Discussion of Results

Findings revealed with NGOs activities influence health development in rural communities of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This findings is consistent with Pilot (1999) and UNAIDS (1999), Chiazor (2002), Ojo (2003), Kanu (2003), Chevron (2003), CPD (2005), Akpanudoedehe (2006), Njiogu (2006). They held that, there is a functional relationship between NGOs and health development in rural areas.

NGOs creates awareness and mobilize people in rural, on means of preventing and reducing HIV/AIDS infections in Akwa Ibom State. Students are trained to serve as youth peer facilitators. People living with HIV/AIDS are trained to acquired basic skills to enable them feed and sustain themselves. For instance, CPD trained vulnerable groups in Abiakpo, Okop Ndua Erong and Four Towns on basic skill acquisition to pull them away from being commercial sex workers (CPD, 2005).

Similarly, Chiazor (2002) observed that LAPO organized health awareness campaign for rural dwellers on women and child-health problems. LAPO activities focused on reactivation of health pogrammes, water, sanitation and mass awareness campaign. According to Chiazor (2002), seminars, workshops and symposia were organized by LAPO to cover areas such as immunization against polio, diphtheria, whopping cough, and tuberculosis, management of cases like diarrhea, child nutrition and birth spacing.

Kanu (2003) observed that, Ohoyeta Care Group (OCAG) worked with women living with HIV/AIDS, organized sexual and reproductive health programme, provide care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS in Otukpo, Benue State. Arguing further Ojo (2003) asserted that GPI in Cross River State recorded remarkable achievements in girls' health both in rural and urban areas.

According to Ojo (2003), GPI activities focused primarily on information and education of the girl child on issues about sexuality, reproductive health and health rights. According of

Chevron (2003), the activities of NGOs in rural transportation in the Niger Delta region cannot be over emphasized. For example, Chevron Nigeria Limited in partnership with NGOs, embarked on HIV/AIDS programmes in areas of education, voluntary testing, counseling and treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS.

It obvious, therefore, that without NGOs participation in the health sector, the health problems of rural communities in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State in particular would have escalated. It also revealed that government alone cannot adequately fund the health sector and carter for the health problems in rural communities. It further shows that the health development of rural communities in Akwa Ibom State lies to a great extent on the effectiveness of NGOs.

The study also revealed that NGOs contributed significantly in rural economic transformation in Akwa Ibom State. The finding corroborates Chiazor (2002), Kanu (2003), and Chevron (2003) they all observed that, NGOs contribute remarkably to economic development in rural communities.

For instance, Chevron (2003) observed that IFESH worked in collaboration with Chevron Nigeria Limited to train approximately 100 youths in 2003 to increase production capacity of fishermen and farmers in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. IFESH in collaboration with Chevron financed private credit fund, provide basic skill and small credit loans to rural communities in the Niger Delta region.

Similarly, Kanu (2003) observed that, NGOs embarked on programmes that radically transformed rural economies in Imo state. NNNGO economic and social empowerment programmes for rural communities in Imo state include – establishment of poultry farms, provision of micro credit facilities and training programmes on how to start small and medium scale business. In the same vien, Chiazor (2003), summits that LAPO provides credit facilities in rural communities. LAPO credit facilities are directed to income activities; these loans have low interest rate.

The activities of NGOs in rural economic transformation cannot be relegated, because micro credit loans and other credit facilities provided by NGOs serve as effective escalators from and a potent weapon for fighting poverty. Existing business in rural communities are sustained by NGO's loan facilities. Again, the activities of NGOs revealed that, rural dwellers are trained to acquire skills for employment and basic skill to start small and medium scale business. NGOs serve as complementary agent to government rural economic transformation drive (Akpanudoedehe, 2006).

The study also revealed that NGOs operations in Akwa Ibom State significantly influence educational development in rural communities. This finding is consistent to Ikpi (1999), Sowunimi (2004), and Akpanudoedehe (2006). GPI for instance, established libraries in the South-South and south-East Geopolitical Zones of Nigeria. Similarly, Sowunmi (2004) observed that, the unsafe and poor healthy conditions in which most schools operate in Nigeria, is an indication that government alone cannot provide basic infrastructure in schools thus the assistance of NGOs inevitable.

The study further uncovered the relationship between NGOs and job creations in rural communities in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This finding corroborates Chiazor (2002), Kanu (2003), Chevron (2003), and Akpanudoedehe (2006), and, they observed that, since



unemployment remains a fact of life in Nigeria and government alone cannot deal with the problem, NGOs are actively involved in solving this problem especially in remote communities. In 2003, for instance, Chevron in partnership with IFESH created jobs through skill acquisition programmes and small business credit scheme in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Over 1000 youths were trained on basic skills to increase productivity in fish farming (Chevron, 2003). Similarly, Kanu (2003) observed that, NNNGO through the establishment of poultry farms and skill acquisition centres programme created jobs among rural women in Imo State.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study examined the impact of NGOs on rural development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically the impact of NGOs on economic, job creation, health and educational development in rural communities were investigated. Abiakpo in Obot Akara, Four Towns in Onna and Okop Ndua Erong in Ibesikpo Asutan were selected for the study. The results revealed that NGOs activities significantly influence health, job creation, education and economic development in rural communities in Akwa Ibom State. Based on the research findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. NGOs in Nigeria should adopt participatory approach in their rural development programmes. This would ensure programme continuity and promote communal participation.
2. To avoid duplication of functions and waste of resources. Government and NGOs should serve as complementary agents in rural development.
3. NGOs should ensure that their programmes are not politicized. Allocation of projects/programmes should be influenced by felt needs of rural communities.

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**Appendix**

**Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents**

Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	700	56.00
Female	550	44.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1250</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Below 40 years	625	50.00
41-50	500	40.00
51 and above	125	10.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1250</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	550	44.00
Married	500	48.00
Separated	50	4.00
Divorced	50	4.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1250</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Highest Educational Qualification</b>		
FSLC	200	16.00
SSCE	500	40.00
NCE	300	24.00
University	250	20.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1250</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field work (2010)

**Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between NGOs Operations and Health Development in Rural Communities**

Variables	N	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r-value	critical -r
		$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$			
NGOs operations		2821	95921			
	1250			36951	0.567	0.062
Health development in rural communities		3009	38792			

\* P<.05, df 1248



**Table 3:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between NGOs Activities and Rural Economic Development

Variables	N	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r-value	critical -r
NGOs activities		2932	56003			
	1250			40214	0.560	0.062
Rural economic development		3009	37784			

\* P<.05, df 1248

**Table 4:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between NGOs Activities and the Development of Education in Rural Communities

Variables	N	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r-value	critical -r
NGOs education programmes		3834	62112			
	1250			41112	0.800*	0.062
Development of education in rural communities		3009	38792			

\* P<.05, df 1248

**Table 5:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between NGOs Activities and Job Creation in Rural Communities.

Variables	N	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r-value	critical -r
NGOs activities		3836	62112			
	1250			47646	0.54	0.19
Job creation in rural communities		3009	38792			

\* P<.05, df= 1248

