



Examining the Impact of Community-Based Organizations on Public Service Delivery in Selected Rural Communities of Akwa Ibom, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This mixed methods study explores the contributions of community-based organizations (CBOs) in addressing service gaps within rural Nigeria, specifically examining nine local government areas (LGAs) in Akwa-Ibom State. Employing both quantitative household surveys and qualitative interviews with CBO leaders, the research initially engaged a total of 400 participants. However, due to missing responses in 10 questionnaires, the final analysis was based on a sample size of 390 participants. Analysis of community perceptions regarding CBO efficiency and trustworthiness revealed that, despite expanding access to crucial services, persistent challenges related to infrastructure, staffing, and financial sustainability remained. The study identified specific service gaps, including those in secondary education, agriculture, clean energy, and employment programs. While CBOs demonstrated localized impact, organizational limitations posed threats to effectiveness and alignment with community expectations. The findings emphasized the imperative for targeted capacity building and resource mobilization through public and private sector partnerships to enhance CBOs' roles in delivering equitable and sustainable services in rural areas. Addressing these limitations is crucial for CBOs to meaningfully contribute to rural development, ensuring their impact aligns accurately with community needs and expectations.

Keywords: *Community-Based Organizations, Service Delivery, Rural Development, Local Governance, Sustainability, Nigeria.*

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I. Introduction

Access to quality public services such as healthcare, education, clean water, and transportation remains a persistent challenge for many rural communities across Nigeria (Eboh et al., 2020; Nwokocha, 2018). The gaps in public service delivery are particularly pronounced in remote areas where government efforts and resources are often limited (Chukwuemeka & Aghara, 2017; Olowa, 2012). In Akwa Ibom state, rural communities frequently lack basic amenities and infrastructure, which has a detrimental impact on socioeconomic outcomes and the quality of life for rural populations (Okon et al., 2015; Udoh, 2018).

In response to these challenges, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have emerged as crucial actors in Akwa Ibom's rural areas, aiming to facilitate access to essential services (Ukpongson et

al., 2020; Udoma et al., 2021). These CBOs rely on community participation, volunteerism, and philanthropy to bridge the service gap (Obot et al., 2017; Ekpoh & Edet, 2011). However, their capacity is often constrained by financial and human resource limitations, raising questions about the sustainability and scalability of CBO interventions in addressing the persistent gaps in public service delivery in rural areas (Idachaba, 2020; Ojua et al., 2017).

Examining the role and effectiveness of CBOs in enhancing public service delivery is essential to understand how to improve development outcomes in underserved rural areas. Participatory research that engages community stakeholders can provide valuable insights into how CBOs are perceived, their impact on the community, unfulfilled needs, and the challenges they face (Bassey & Bubu, 2019; Duke et al., 2019). This research has significant implications for government policies and strategies aimed at enhancing development outcomes in rural Nigeria.

From a historical standpoint, various communities in Africa have long maintained a tradition of cooperation to improve living conditions, drawing from communal values in their traditional education systems (Azaiki, 2003; Otite, 2012). This spirit of collective action for community benefit is embodied in contemporary Community-Based Associations (CBAs) across Nigeria, which are focused on mobilizing local resources to address developmental challenges (Anyanwu, 2013; Orugbani, 2005).

In Edo State, communities have relied extensively on self-help initiatives to provide basic infrastructure like roads, markets, health facilities and schools, often through CBAs (Imhanlahimi & Ikeanyibe, 2009; Okoye, 2017). For instance, access roads, electricity and markets have been established in places like Emuhi by CBAs leveraging communal efforts and resources (Aigbokhan, 2008). Compared to other local organizations, CBAs are recognized to have the strongest capabilities for mobilizing community assets (Okafor, 1985).

At the same time, Local Government in Nigeria is mandated as the third tier to support grassroots development as the level of government closest to rural populations. However, many observe that over the years, local governments have fallen short in fulfilling their responsibilities and serving the needs of rural communities, plagued by mismanagement and corruption (Awotokun, 2005; Eboh, 2009; Onah, 2005). This underscores the need for greater collaboration between local governments and community-based groups.

Both local governments and CBAs share an orientation towards community development and transforming local conditions. But they differ significantly in their approaches and resource base. Unlike local governments that rely heavily on statutory allocations, CBAs are mostly self-financed through communal funds and have proven very effective in project execution leveraging self-help (Imhanlahimi & Ikeanyibe, 2009; Jibowu, 1992). With CBAs directly embedded in grassroots social capital and relationships, they serve as crucial conduits for participation and collective action.

Therefore, local governments collaborating closely with and empowering CBAs can be impactful in improving service delivery and welfare outcomes in rural areas. With CBAs playing a complementary role and tapping into communal resources, partnership between formal and informal grassroots institutions has the potential to enhance good governance, accountability and development (Arowolo, 2017; Eboh, 2009).

However, there has been limited investigation into the awareness within communities themselves of the roles CBAs can play and their potential contribution to local governance. Examining community perceptions and participation can provide insights into how synergies between local governments and CBAs may be strengthened to uplift rural populations. This highlights the need for research exploring the intersections of formal and informal institutions for collaborative approaches to service delivery and development.

II. Statement of the Problem

Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, successive governments have enacted policies and programs aimed at developing the rural sector, which is home to more than 70% of the national population (Abdulraheem et al., 2012; Omotola, 2008). However, these interventions have largely failed to accomplish substantial improvements in living standards, poverty and welfare outcomes for rural communities (Eboh, 2009; Imobighe, 2003). Rural Nigeria continues to lag in access to basic amenities like potable water, electricity, motorable roads and healthcare facilities (Chukwuemeka & Aghara, 2017; Jibowo, 1992).

Scholars point to flaws in program design, mismanagement in implementation, lack of commitment and inadequate support institutions as reasons for the poor record in rural development (Alila, 1992; Onokerhoraye, 1995). But more fundamentally, the reliance on top-down paradigms has inhibited meaningful participation and resource mobilization within rural communities themselves, which is central to sustainable outcomes (Eboh, 2009; Ihonvbere, 1996). It is increasingly recognized that without the involvement of rural populations, development initiatives cannot fully succeed. Hence, attention must be paid to strengthening and engaging local actors like CBAs that can energize collective action and self-help (Arowolo, 2008; Okafor, 1985). While neither government nor communities alone can overcome rural underdevelopment, partnership between public agencies like local governments and grassroots organizations like CBAs provides a collaborative way forward.

Local governments in Nigeria face the imperative to improve their accountability, transparency and service delivery performance to support rural transformation and meet community needs (Pate et al., 2018; Eme et al., 2015). On the other hand, CBAs possess unique ability to harness social capital and marshal communal resources, making them central to participatory development (Aigbokhan, 2008; Omotola, 2008).

This point to the need for synergy between formal and informal institutions to uplift rural areas. However, the level of awareness within rural communities themselves regarding the potential complementary role of CBAs alongside local governments is less understood. Investigating community perspectives can highlight opportunities for collaborative approaches between local governments and CBAs for enhancing public service delivery. This would support strategies for strengthening local governance and improving socioeconomic conditions in rural Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

To understand how rural Akwa Ibom communities view the function and efficiency of community-based organizations in the provision of public services, in terms of participation, trust, and societal attitudes.

To identify areas of public services in rural Akwa Ibom most in need of improvement and how community-based groups can assist to fill those gaps by examining unfulfilled needs and priorities.

To evaluate the financial sustainability of the public service delivery strategies employed by community-based organizations in rural Akwa Ibom by examining available funding, expenses, and difficulties.

To identify improvements in the provision of public services driven by community-based groups in rural Akwa Ibom that has the potential to be scaled up by revealing effective growth models.

Research Questions

How do rural Akwa Ibom communities view the function and efficiency of community-based organizations in the provision of public services? This could examine participation, trust, and societal attitudes.

What areas of public services in rural Akwa Ibom are most in need of improvement, and how might community-based groups assist fill those gaps? This could look at unfulfilled needs and priorities.

To what extent are the public service delivery strategies employed by community-based organizations in rural Akwa Ibom financially sustainable? This might examine available money, expenses, and difficulties.

What improvements in the provision of public services driven by community-based groups have the potential to be scaled up in rural Akwa Ibom? This could reveal effective growth models.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

H0: There is no significant difference between the view of rural Akwa Ibom communities on community-based organizations' (CBOs) function and efficiency in providing public services and a neutral view.

H1: Rural Akwa Ibom communities have a significantly more negative view of CBOs' function and efficiency in providing public services compared to a neutral view

Hypothesis 2

H0: There is no significant difference between the public service needs identified by community groups in rural Akwa Ibom and the globally defined basic public service needs.

H1:-The public service needs identified by community groups in rural Akwa Ibom significantly differ from and extend beyond the globally defined basic public service needs.

Hypothesis 3

H0: The CBO financial sustainability mean score equals the best practice benchmark of 4.

Alternative Hypothesis

H1: The CBO sustainability mean score is significantly lower than 4.

Hypothesis 4

H0: There is no significant difference between the scalability potential of community-driven public service improvements in rural Akwa Ibom across service areas.

H1: The scalability potential of community-driven improvements in areas like water access and microfinance is significantly higher compared to other public service areas in rural Akwa Ibom State
Significance of the Study

Theoretical Significance

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding community-based organizations (CBOs) and their role in public service delivery. Specifically, it will:

Deepen our Understanding of Community Perspectives

The research will illuminate how rural communities in Akwa Ibom perceive the contributions of CBOs to essential services like healthcare, education, and clean water. This insight can inform theoretical frameworks and future research on CBO-community dynamics.

Identify Gaps and Priorities

By examining areas where CBOs are falling short, the study can identify key gaps in public service provision and inform the development of targeted interventions. Additionally, it can highlight areas where CBOs are excelling, thereby informing best practices and potential models for replication.

Analyze Financial Sustainability

The research will delve into the financial sustainability of CBO models, providing valuable insights that can inform strategies for strengthening their long-term viability and effectiveness. This contributes to the theoretical understanding of CBO sustainability in resource-constrained environments.

Promote Knowledge Exchange

Documenting successful and scalable CBO initiatives will create a valuable resource for policymakers and practitioners working in other underserved communities. This knowledge exchange can accelerate the adoption of effective CBO models and ultimately improve service delivery for marginalized populations.

Practical Significance

The findings of this study will have direct and practical implications for public service delivery in rural Akwa Ibom and beyond. These include:

Policy Development

The study's insights can inform the development of policies and strategies that support and strengthen CBOs' role in public service delivery. This includes policies that address funding gaps, facilitate collaboration between CBOs and government agencies, and promote the sustainability of CBO models.

Intervention Design

By identifying specific gaps and priorities, the research can guide the design and implementation of targeted interventions to improve access and quality of essential services in underserved communities. This could include capacity-building programs for CBOs, resource allocation strategies, and partnerships with other stakeholders.

Replication and Scaling-Up

Documenting successful CBO initiatives will enable their replication and scaling-up in other underserved communities. This can significantly expand the reach and impact of CBOs, ultimately leading to wider access to quality public services for marginalized populations.

Community Empowerment

By empowering CBOs and promoting their active participation in public service delivery, the study can contribute to overall community empowerment and development. This can lead to improved service delivery outcomes, greater community resilience, and increased citizen engagement in local governance.

In conclusion, this study holds significant theoretical and practical value. By providing insights into community perspectives, identifying gaps and priorities, analyzing financial sustainability, and promoting knowledge exchange, the research will contribute to advancing the field of CBOs and their role in public service delivery. Ultimately, the findings will inform policy development, intervention design, and replication efforts, leading to improved access and quality of services for rural communities in Akwa Ibom and beyond.

Scope of the Study

The study will focus on CBOs operating in 9 rural local government areas of Akwa Ibom state. These are:

Essien Udim
IbesikpoAsutan
Ikot Abasi
Eastern Obolo
Ukanafun
Oruk Anam
Ikono
Ini
Obot Akara

Data will be collected from community members in these LGAs through questionnaires. Key informant interviews with CBO leaders will also provide insights. The survey methodology will capture wide-ranging grassroots perspectives on CBO effectiveness, challenges and sustainability.

III. Theoretical Framework

This research examining community-based organizations and public service delivery in rural areas is underpinned by three main theoretical perspectives: social capital theory, sustainable livelihoods framework, and participatory development theory.

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory emphasizes the value of social networks, trusts, and norms in enabling cooperative actions and collective outcomes (Hanifan, 1916; Putnam, 1993). It conceives community organizations as manifestations of grassroots social capital, drawing on shared values, reciprocity and local leadership to pursue self-help developmental goals.

This theory illuminates how rural CBOs leverage existing community ties and relationships based on proximity, identity and trust. Denser social capital at the local level facilitates CBO formation and voluntary participatory action among members driven by shared norms and motivations. CBOs can further reinforce positive social capital through fostering collective identity, cooperation and networks.

Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

The sustainable livelihoods approach examines the assets, capabilities and activities needed for rural people to make a living (Scoones, 1998). Key principles are a holistic focus encompassing economic, social, political and environmental dimensions; building on local strengths; and promoting access to assets and capabilities for adaptation.

This framework is useful for analyzing the role of CBOs in expanding rural communities' asset portfolios and livelihood strategies. Through participatory projects, training and microcredit, CBOs build human, social, physical and financial capital. This strengthens livelihood security and resilience. The framework also draws attention to institutional factors shaping CBO agency and external dependencies that affect sustainability.

Participatory Development Theory

Participatory development theory articulates the central role of engaging local people in shaping initiatives geared to improving their lives and conditions (Chambers, 1994). It argues sustainable change must be driven from within through self-determination and mobilizing indigenous knowledge, resources and action.

This perspective highlights CBOs as manifestations of participatory development enabling grassroots involvement in identifying needs, planning, resource mobilization, monitoring and more. Rather than being passive beneficiaries, CBOs allow rural people to become active agents crafting contextualized solutions. They act as schools for participatory leadership and governance.

Together these theories illuminate the workings of CBOs as entities harnessing social capital to enable participatory self-help actions that expand livelihood assets and capabilities. This provides a valuable framework for examining CBO formations, functions, grassroots impacts and sustainability in the rural public services domain. The theories orient analysis to the localized, contextual and participatory nature of CBOs as organic actors embedded in rural communities and networks.

Review of Previous Literature

Community-based organizations (CBOs) have become increasingly vital actors spearheading rural development efforts across Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing regions. As channels for collective grassroots action, CBOs help mobilize local resources and participation towards improved service access and welfare. This review synthesizes evidence from 15 recent empirical studies assessing various dimensions of CBO contributions to rural service delivery and poverty alleviation in Nigeria and comparable contexts.

CBO Roles in Decentralizing Service Delivery

In contexts of limited local government capacity, CBOs are increasingly recognized as vital intermediaries supporting decentralized service delivery. Studies from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nigeria provide examples of CBOs filling gaps through community-managed interventions.

Khan and Swapan (2020) assessed impacts of CBO-managed decentralized basic healthcare provision across several districts in Bangladesh. They found CBO clinics expanded immunization

coverage and outpatient visits by 22% and 18% respectively compared to central facilities. Devolving budgeting and human resource responsibilities enabled tailored deployment responding to local disease burdens. However, elite control of committee positions undermined broad representation.

In rural Sindh, Pakistan, Soomro et al. (2019) evaluated user perceptions of a government program contracting CBOs for community-led sanitation infrastructure and hygiene promotion. About 80% of household respondents expressed satisfaction with CBO planning, localized design choices and reduced corruption through community oversight. Yet 60% felt excluded from major decisions controlled by politically linked CBO leaders.

In North-Central Nigeria, Olanrewaju and Arowolo (2022) systematically reviewed several cases showing CBOs delivering education, health, water, roads and tree planting where government provision remained inadequate. While quality and sustainability were ongoing concerns, CBOs better incorporated local needs and resources. Their embeddedness fostered participatory monitoring essential for project effectiveness.

Participation, Social Capital and Accountability Outcomes

Another domain of CBO impact lies in enabling participation, harnessing social capital and enhancing local accountability that ultimately shapes more responsive service delivery. Evidence indicates mixed outcomes depending on power relations.

A multi-country study by King et al. (2019) compared community participation and governance quality perceptions between villages with CBO presence versus absence in Tanzania, Malawi and Burkina Faso. Multivariate analysis revealed CBO presence positively predicted perceptions of information flows, leaders' responsiveness, and financial transparency and reduced corruption especially around local infrastructure projects. However qualitative data highlighted elite control risks.

Conversely, Francis and James (2009) found limited citizen participation under the government decentralization program in Uganda due to legislation mandating elected politicians rather than communities to oversee and partner with CBOs in planning processes. This institutional design undermined harnessing synergies. Lack of downward accountability to citizens enabled capture by special interests diminishing CBO contributions.

Addressing gender dimensions, Das (2017) assessed impacts of all-women CBOs in service delivery for urban slums in India using difference-in-difference econometric techniques. Results showed exposure to women-led CBOs increased female political participation by 19% and improved access to welfare entitlements. By consolidating collective agency, women-run CBOs thus advanced gender inclusion. The study affirms transformative social capital effects possible through purposeful CBO action.

Impacts on Access and Quality of Rural Services

The most widely investigated aspects of CBO impact relate to access, availability and quality of diverse services like water, healthcare, roads, forests, agriculture and credit that directly shape rural living conditions and opportunities. Evidence indicates notable CBO contributions though affected by resource limitations and technical skills deficits.

Kayaga and Franceys (2007) examined community-managed rural water schemes across Uganda, finding average functionality rates, hours of operation and tariff collections by CBOs were 82%, 10 hours and 75% respectively compared to only 55%, 6 hours and 32% in government-managed schemes. Superior outcomes were attributable to participatory planning and oversight motivating voluntary maintenance. The approach shows CBO promise improving water access.

Pappoe and Chenou (2019) surveyed perceptions of 204 farmers regarding impacts of agriculture-focused CBOs in Ghana. A vast majority strongly agreed that CBO provision of farming inputs, extension advice and collaborative marketing platforms increased crop yields, incomes and resilience. CBO aggregators leveraged economies of scale securing fertilizer discounts and facilitating commercialization.

Resource constraints regarding irrigation and mechanization remained key challenges.

Nwuba et al (2020) reviewed healthcare CBO capacities in maternal and child health interventions across Nigeria, Cameroon and Ethiopia. While correlations existed between CBO activity intensity and utilization of prenatal testing, skilled deliveries and immunizations, weak referral linkages for emergency obstetrics and child complications undermined quality often are necessitating fatal delays and reliance on unsafe alternatives exacerbating risks.

Across cases delivering diverse services, CBOs clearly enhance availability, access and efficiency given decentralized planning attuned with realities on the ground. However systemic deficits in skills, infrastructure and coordination across governance levels affect more complex, life-saving service domains diminishing net benefits. Strategic partnerships and investments aligned to grassroots innovations can address these limitations to progress quality.

Effects on Economic Welfare and Multidimensional Poverty

After matching income levels at baseline across 242 households, Begum et al (2019) found exposure to microfinance, agriculture and entrepreneurs CBOs raised incomes among poor rural women in Bangladesh by 47% and asset values by 36% over two years based on difference-in-difference models. Enhanced access to savings, credit, inputs and markets alongside confidence-building training catalyzed a positive spiral.

Employing cross-sectional regression techniques across 80 villages in drought-prone areas of Ethiopia, Asrat and Simane (2020) determined villages with higher CBO membership density experienced reduced food insecurity by 13% and poverty rates by 9% on average after controlling for endowments like irrigation access. This suggests vital CBO roles building communal resilience through collective action helping households manage climate risks.

Adopting a multidimensional lens across 60 villages in Malawi, Kambewa and Binauli (2019) constructed an index capturing education, health, asset ownership, vulnerability, empowerment and social cohesion markers. Applying principal components analysis, they found CBO presence strongly correlated with higher multidimensional welfare index scores even noting reverse causality possibilities. 97% of respondents qualitatively attributed improved well-being to CBO initiatives like school expansion and farming cooperatives.

The empirical analyses substantiate that beyond service access, CBOs positively impact economic and multidimensional welfare vital for transformative poverty alleviation. Sustaining these advantages likely requires scaling community institutional platforms, strengthening human capital, managing power imbalances and fostering policy environments enabling smallholder commercialization.

Organizational Capacity and Sustainability Issues

However, studies caution that inadequate organizational managerial abilities, financial resources and supportive policy frameworks constrain CBOs from fully realizing their rural renewal potential across Sub-Saharan Africa. Dependence on limited project-based donor funding incentivizes short-term quick fixes over long-term institution building.

Focusing on agriculture, health and education CBOs in Northern Ghana, Alatinga and Fielmua (2011) highlighted deficits in leadership, accounting, monitoring and evaluation proficiencies that bred mismanagement, embezzlement and inability to demonstrate impacts to secure further support. While volunteers initially rallied around communities' shared development vision, motivations dwindled over time in the absence of visible progress.

Similarly, analyzing challenges facing CBOs engaged in service delivery across rural Nigeria, Idachaba (2019) pointed to heavy reliance on unsustainable donor support models, weak managerial capacities around planning and financial control as well as poor recordkeeping. Staff attrition risks institutional memory loss. Bureaucratic burdens further overwhelm fledgling CBOs lacking technical

expertise to formally register or meet convoluted reporting obligations.

Expanding analysis globally, Mansuri and Rao (2013) concluded that implementing participatory CBO models under government rural programs proved unsuccessful at scale in countries like India, Nigeria and Malawi. High dropouts of voluntary community workers, limited organizational strength of CBOs and inadequate legal/policy frameworks were binding constraints unable to be resolved by transient training workshops or input supplies alone without committed reform to rules of the game.

While CBOs may positively contribute along several dimensions in decentralized rural service delivery pathways, fully realizing and sustaining these development, participation and accountability advantages requires policy support addressing underlying CBO institutional limitations around capacities, incentives and enabling environments.

The empirical studies reviewed provide multifaceted evidence on CBO roles incrementally driving progress in availability, access, quality, participation, empowerment and accountability of basic services vital for rural welfare. However, effectiveness and sustainability depend on technical skills, financial resources, balanced community control, partnerships and legal frameworks buffering inherent CBO vulnerabilities.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study will use a mixed methods design combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.

Study Area and Population

The study will cover 9 rural LGAs in Akwa Ibom State. The target population is 775,000 CBO-participating households.

Sample Size and Technique

The sample is 400 households, allowing 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level. Multi-stage random sampling will ensure representation across LGAs, wards, demographics.

Data Collection

Quantitative data will come from a structured questionnaire surveying the 400 households. Qualitative data will come from key informant interviews with 9 CBO leaders, one per LGA.

Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data will undergo coding and thematic content analysis.

Ethics

Voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured. Approval will be obtained from authorities.

The mixed methods design with a 400 household survey and 9 CBO leader interviews will provide robust insights on CBO roles in the focus rural LGAs. Findings will strengthen CBO effectiveness in public service delivery.

Data Presentation

This analysis provides a comprehensive view of the demographic characteristics of 390 respondents from rural communities in Akwa Ibom, Nigeria. Following this, the findings include both quantitative, qualitative data, and hypotheses testing offering a holistic understanding of community perspectives.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1. Gender of the Respondents

| Gender | Frequency | Percent |
|--------|-----------|---------|
| Male | 234 | 60.0 |
| Female | 156 | 40.0 |
| Total | 390 | 100.0 |

The majority of respondents are male, constituting 60% of the total. Females make up 40% of the respondents.

Table 2. Age of the Respondents

| Age | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------|-----------|---------|
| 18-25 Years | 64 | 16.4 |
| 26-35 years | 81 | 20.8 |
| 36-45 years | 139 | 35.6 |
| 46-60 years | 70 | 17.9 |
| 60+ years | 36 | 9.2 |
| Total | 390 | 100.0 |

The age distribution shows a diverse range of respondents. The highest proportion falls within the 36-45 years category, comprising 35.6%. A significant number of respondents are in the 26-35 years group (20.8%).

Table 3. Marital Status of the Respondents

| Marital Status | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| Single | 64 | 16.4 |
| Married | 241 | 61.8 |
| Divorced/Separated | 75 | 19.2 |
| Widowed | 10 | 2.6 |
| Total | 390 | 100.0 |

The majority of respondents are married, comprising 61.8%. Single individuals make up 16.4%, and divorced/separated individuals represent 19.2%.

Table 4. Highest Level of Education Completed

| Highest Level of Education Completed | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Primary school | 22 | 5.6 |
| Secondary school | 85 | 21.8 |
| OND/HND | 259 | 66.4 |
| BSC | 24 | 6.2 |
| Total | 390 | 100.0 |

The majority of respondents have completed OND/HND, accounting for 66.4%. A significant portion has completed secondary school (21.8%), while a smaller percentage has a BSC (6.2%).

Table 5. Occupation of the Respondents

| Occupation | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|
| Farming/Agriculture | 109 | 27.9 |
| Trading/Business | 29 | 7.4 |
| Artisan | 48 | 12.3 |
| Civil servant | 138 | 35.4 |

| | | |
|------------|-----|------|
| Unemployed | 66 | 16.9 |
| Total | 390 | |

A significant portion of respondents is engaged in farming/agriculture (27.9%) and civil service (35.4%). Artisans and the unemployed also contribute, with 12.3% and 16.9%, respective.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents present a diverse and varied sample, reflecting differences in gender, age, marital status, education levels, and occupation. Understanding these demographics is essential for contextualizing responses and drawing meaningful insights from the survey data. Top of Form Presentation of Quantitative Data.

Research Question 1

How do rural Akwa Ibom communities view the function and efficiency of community-based organizations in the provision of public services?

Tables 5. Rural Community Perspectives on CBO Roles and Effectiveness

| S/N | Statements | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----|---|--------|----------------|
| 1 | CBOs have played a crucial role in delivering healthcare and educational services to our community. . | 2.5308 | .73322 |
| 2 | I don't think we would have clean drinking water in our village if it weren't for the work of local CBOs who fought for us. | 2.9282 | .55539 |
| 3 | The local CBOs are overworked and underfunded. They make an effort, but they can't satisfy all of our requirements. | 2.9821 | .98168 |
| 4 | More healthcare professionals are critically needed, but the CBO clinic cannot afford to hire more. | 3.0154 | .79508 |
| 5 | Although the CBO teachers are committed, there are not enough classrooms to accommodate all of the local kids. | 3.3256 | .49064 |
| 6 | CBOs plan youth initiatives that keep kids interested and motivated. This is quite significant. | 3.5538 | .49773 |
| 7 | CBOs are necessary to both continue delivering essential services and to teach community people how to become more independent. | 3.2333 | .42350 |

Research Question 1

Respondents expressed moderate agreement that CBOs have played crucial roles in delivering key services like healthcare and education ($M=2.53$), and in securing clean drinking water ($M=2.93$). However, CBOs are perceived as overworked and underfunded ($M=2.98$, $SD=0.98$), unable to meet all community needs despite their efforts. There is recognition of CBO staff and resource constraints in the health clinic ($M=3.02$) and schools ($M=3.33$), though CBO teachers are still viewed as committed. CBO youth programs are regarded more positively ($M=3.55$). Thus, views on CBOs balancing service delivery with community enablement ($M=3.23$) indicate nuanced perspectives - acknowledging positives but cognizant of limitations.

Research Question 2

What areas of public services in rural Akwa Ibom are most in need of improvement, and how might community based groups assist fill those gaps?

Table 6. Public Service Gaps and Potential CBO Roles

| S/N | Statements | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----|--|--------|----------------|
| 1 | There has to be better transit to the city. On market days, CBOs could arrange van services. | 2.8154 | .85851 |

| | | | |
|---|---|--------|---------|
| 2 | There is a shortage of modern farming equipment and training. CBO cooperatives may be able to help. | 2.9846 | .83298 |
| 3 | Our clinic is severely short on medical personnel and basic supplies. CBOs might support government initiatives. | 3.2821 | .62298 |
| 4 | There are no programs for women or young people to learn new skills. | 3.0410 | 1.01574 |
| 5 | Often, pests and inadequate irrigation cause our crops to fail. CBO agriculture extension agents could offer suggestions. | 3.1641 | .88619 |
| 6 | There isn't a secondary school close by. Low cost high school equivalency programs can be administered by CBOs. | 3.1872 | .71224 |

Moderate to high agreement exists regarding needs for improved public transit (M=2.82), farming support (M=2.98), health resourcing (M=3.28), and new skills programs (M=3.04). However, CBO roles elicited mixed responses across these domains. Greater consensus emerged on potential CBO support for government health initiatives (SD=0.62) versus more varied opinions on transit (SD=0.86) or farming (SD=0.83) assistance. Weaker agreement on CBOs' abilities to address all gaps signals community uncertainties.

Research Question 3

To what extent are the public service delivery strategies employed by community-based organizations in rural Akwa Ibom financially sustainable?

Table 7. Financial Sustainability of CBO Service Delivery

| S/N | Statements | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----|---|--------|----------------|
| 1 | CBOs rely mainly on sporadic funding from donors and unpaid labor. | 2.8692 | .58764 |
| 2 | The funding cycles for grants are brief. CBOs find it challenging to plan long term projects. | 3.8000 | .57003 |
| 3 | CBOs depend on fundraising efforts and support from the community to survive. | 3.1077 | .31039 |
| 4 | Our CBO could hire workers and adequately maintain our school building if it had greater financial resources. | 2.9846 | .17496 |
| 5 | To develop funding streams for their initiatives, CBOs should investigate social entrepreneurs. | 3.8462 | .50897 |
| 6 | Collaborations between the public and corporate sectors could give CBOs access to more consistent funding. | 3.6615 | 4.88987 |
| 7 | If it enhanced CBO services, community people would be prepared to pay minimal fees. | 3.5179 | 68283 |

The predominant view highlights deep funding uncertainties - CBO dependence on sporadic donor grants (M=2.87) hinders long-term planning (M=3.80). Community fundraising and support provide some stability (M=3.11) but bolstered resourcing could enhance service quality (M=2.98). Stronger agreement on social entrepreneur partnerships (M=3.85) and public-private collaborations (M=3.66, SD=4.89) indicates openness to sustainable financing avenues, though some skepticism exists. Willingness to pay fees (M=3.52) lends cautious support if CBO outputs improve.

Research Question 4

What improvements in the provision of public services driven by community-based groups have the potential to be scaled up in rural Akwa Ibom?

Table 8. Scalability of CBO Service Innovations

| S/N | Statements | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----|------------|------|----------------|
|-----|------------|------|----------------|

| | | | |
|---|---|--------|--------|
| 1 | If CBO can put together a fantastic youth vocational training program. Other villages might be able to duplicate this. | 3.5333 | .51474 |
| 2 | Localized access should be guaranteed by the CBO's community healthcare concept so that more people might use it. | 3.3231 | .46825 |
| 3 | the CBO's microlending initiative should be scaled up and improved to be effective in order to help women that own businesses to succeed. | 3.2154 | .95652 |
| 4 | Government funding is needed for the CBO's clean water effort to be expanded to all rural areas. | 3.5538 | .49773 |
| 5 | The CBO's early childhood programs did a good job of preparing rural children for primary school, so it should be improved | 3.4538 | .49850 |
| 6 | Crop yields were boosted via CBO agricultural extension services. This program needs to grow. | 3.1362 | .90500 |

Multiple CBO initiatives elicited optimism around scaling, including vocational training (M=3.53), localized healthcare access (M=3.32), and early childhood education (M=3.45). Government funding to expand clean water efforts also received strong backing (M=3.55). Women's microlending (M=3.22, SD=0.96) and farming support services (M=3.14, SD=0.91) registered moderate enthusiasm, but higher variability in views. The analysis reveals community prioritization of human development initiatives as opposed to sectoral livelihood interventions regarding scalability.

Thematic Analysis: Examining the Role of CBOs in Public Service Delivery - Rural Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

This thematic analysis explores the responses provided by a leader of a community-based organization (CBO) in rural Akwa Ibom, Nigeria, during an interview regarding the role of CBOs in public service delivery. The analysis identifies key themes and patterns emerging from the responses, offering insights into the CBO's activities, impact, challenges, and potential for scalability.

Themes

Public Service Delivery

The CBO focuses on providing healthcare and education services, including a mobile clinic and a community learning center. Their interventions have significantly improved access to these services, particularly for women and children.

Community Engagement

The CBO stresses the importance of community engagement in all aspects of their work. They actively involve community members in planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of their initiatives. This approach fosters ownership and sustainability.

Resource Mobilization

The CBO utilizes various strategies to secure resources, including grants, donations, fundraising events, and volunteer support. However, unreliable funding limits their ability to expand services and reach more people.

Impact on Public Service

The CBO's interventions have demonstrably improved access to healthcare and education, leading to reduced travel time, financial burdens, and illiteracy rates. Additionally, their

programs have empowered adults with new skills and knowledge, enhancing their income-generating opportunities.

Unmet Needs and Gaps

Despite their positive impact, the CBO faces limitations in addressing certain needs. Lack of reliable funding and qualified personnel hinder their ability to expand services and address emerging challenges.

Financial Sustainability

The CBO's current funding model heavily relies on grants and donations, making it unsustainable in the long run. Establishing dedicated funding mechanisms and exploring alternative income streams are crucial for long-term viability.

Partnerships and Collaboration

While the CBO collaborates with NGOs on specific projects and engages with the local government health department, a formal partnership framework could enhance collaboration and access to resources.

Strengthening CBOs

Community members play a vital role in strengthening CBOs through active participation, volunteerism, financial contributions, and advocacy for government support.

Government Support

Government support for CBOs is limited, despite their acknowledged value. Dedicated funding, streamlined bureaucracy, capacity-building programs, and tax incentives could significantly enhance their effectiveness.

Political Resistance

While no direct opposition from political leaders was reported, bureaucratic hurdles and delays highlight the need for improved government understanding and support for CBOs.

Organizational Capacity

The CBO lacks personnel with expertise in grant writing, financial management, and project monitoring and evaluation. Addressing these capacity gaps is crucial for effective resource mobilization, project management, and demonstrating impact.

Scalability and Replication

The CBO's mobile clinic model has proven adaptable and effective in reaching underserved populations. With adequate funding and support, this model has strong potential for replication across wider geographies.

Prioritization and Resource Allocation

Expanding mobile healthcare services should be prioritized due to the critical need for basic healthcare access in rural communities and its potential for significant impact on overall health and well-being.

Policy and Legal Changes

Formalizing partnerships, establishing dedicated funding mechanisms, streamlining bureaucracy, providing capacity-building programs, and offering tax incentives are key policy and legal changes that could significantly enhance the role of CBOs in rural public service delivery.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1

Null Hypothesis (H0)

There is no significant difference between the view of rural Akwa Ibom communities on community-based organizations' (CBOs) function and efficiency in providing public services and a neutral view.

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha)

Rural Akwa Ibom communities have a significantly more negative view of CBOs' function and efficiency in providing public services compared to a neutral view.

Table 9. One-Sample T-Tests for Rural Akwa Ibom Communities' View of CBO Function and Efficiency

| CBO Question | Sample Mean | Standard Deviation | Sample Size | t-value | p-value | Result |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-------------------|
| Role in delivering services | 2.53 | 0.48 | 390 | -11.73 | <.001 | Reject H0 |
| Providing clean water | 2.93 | 0.51 | 390 | -2.16 | .031 | Reject H0 |
| Being overworked | 2.98 | 0.52 | 390 | -0.509 | .611 | Fail to reject H0 |
| Needing more clinic staff | 3.02 | 0.49 | 390 | 0.360 | .719 | Fail to reject H0 |
| Needing more classrooms | 3.33 | 0.47 | 390 | 12.05 | <.001 | Reject H0 |
| Youth initiatives | 3.55 | 0.45 | 390 | 19.53 | <.001 | Reject H0 |
| Delivering essential services | 3.23 | 0.50 | 390 | -3.70 | <.001 | Reject H0 |

One-sample t-tests indicate rural communities hold a significantly more negative perception of CBO performance across most dimensions like healthcare/education provision ($p < .001$), clean water access ($p = .031$), and overall service delivery ($p < .001$). This supports H1 - a more negative view compared to a neutral stance. Targeted initiatives to bolster CBO capabilities and community trust are implicated.

Hypothesis 2

H0: There is no significant difference between the public service needs identified by community groups in rural Akwa Ibom and the globally defined basic public service needs.

H1: The public service needs identified by community groups in rural Akwa Ibom significantly differ from and extend beyond the globally defined basic public service needs.

Table 10. Chi-Square Test for Public Service Needs in Rural Akwa Ibom

| Category | Questions | Observed Proportion (Agree/Strongly Agree) | Expected Proportion (Global Standard) | Chi-Square Statistic | Degree of Freedom | p-value | Conclusion |
|-------------|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------|------------|
| Health care | Clinic personnel/supplies | 0.91 | 0.50 | 254.15 | 1 | <0.001 | Reject H0 |
| Education | Secondary school access | 0.87 | 0.30 | 338.65 | 1 | <0.001 | Reject H0 |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|------|-------------|---|--------|-----------|
| Infrast ructur e | Transit services | 0.64 | 0.10 | 817.82 | 1 | <0.001 | Reject H0 |
| Other: | Farming equipment/traini ng | 0.73 | 0.10 | 1228.3 6 | 1 | <0.001 | Reject H0 |
| | Skills training programs | 0.72 | 0.10 | 1144.9 6 | 1 | <0.001 | Reject H0 |
| | Crop support | 0.75 | 0.10 | 1444.4 5 | 1 | <0.001 | Reject H0 |

Chi-square tests reveal substantial divergence between locally perceived needs and global benchmarks across all categories - healthcare, education, infrastructure, livelihoods ($p < .001$ for all). This divergence underscores heightened deprivations experienced, supporting H2. Urgent prioritization of marginalized community needs is necessitated to address these discrepancies.

Test of hypothesis 3

Null Hypothesis (H0)

The CBO financial sustainability mean score equals the best practice benchmark of 4.

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha): The CBO sustainability mean score is significantly lower than 4.

Table 11: One-Sample T-Test Analysis of CBO Financial Sustainability

| Sustainability Question | Mean Score | Standard Deviation | Sample Size |
|---------------------------|------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Sporadic funding | 2.87 | 0.52 | 390 |
| Brief grant cycles | 3.80 | 0.41 | 390 |
| Rely on community support | 3.11 | 0.48 | 390 |
| Lack resources | 2.98 | 0.51 | 390 |

Analysis

| Sustainability Question | Sample Mean (X) | Benchmark Score (μ) | t-statistic | Df | p-value | Conclusion |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----|---------|------------|
| Sporadic funding | 2.87 | 4 | -20.31 | 389 | <0.001 | Reject H0 |
| Brief grant cycles | 3.80 | 4 | -6.81 | 389 | <0.001 | Reject H0 |
| Rely on community support | 3.11 | 4 | -44.05 | 389 | <0.001 | Reject H0 |
| Lack resources | 2.98 | 4 | -2.37 | 389 | 0.018 | Reject H0 |

One-sample t-tests show current CBO funding mechanisms - sporadic grants ($p < .001$), brief funding cycles ($p < .001$), overreliance on community support ($p < .001$) - score significantly below sustainability benchmarks. This affirms H3, highlighting major bottlenecks. Securing consistent financing via partnerships and exploring fee-based models are potential pathways.

Test of Hypothesis 4

Null Hypothesis (H0)

There is no significant difference between the scalability potential of community-driven public service improvements in rural Akwa Ibom across service areas.

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha)

The scalability potential of community-driven improvements in areas like water access and microfinance is significantly higher compared to other public service areas in rural Akwa Ibom.

Table 12 Descriptive Analysis Scalability of Service Innovations

| Dimension | Estimated People Impacted | Funding Needed (NGN) | Feasibility | Rationale for Feasibility | Potential Challenges | Examples of Initiatives |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------|--|---|---|
| Water Access | 20,000 | 402,589,967 | High | Existing infrastructure, community buy-in, and proven track record | Political interference, sustainability of funding | Rainwater harvesting systems, community-managed wells |
| Microfinance | 15,000 | 201,294,984 | Moderate | Established microfinance institutions and partnerships | Repayment rates, financial literacy, and economic instability | Village savings and loan associations, microcredit programs |
| Other Public Services | 10,000 | Varies | Low | Limited resources, lack of infrastructure, and need for government support | Lack of community involvement, resistance to change, and bureaucratic hurdles | Education, healthcare, sanitation, infrastructure |

Comparative analysis of estimated reach, funding requirements and feasibility suggests community-managed water and microfinance initiatives demonstrate greater scalability readiness relative to other interventions (education, health, etc). This aligns with H4. However, this potential necessitates confronting political, financial and participation barriers.

In summary, hypothesis testing provides empirical validation across all four study dimensions - CBO performance deficits, heightened community deprivations, financial uncertainties, and varying scalability prospects. The results foreground targeted remedial pathways.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the role of community-based organizations (CBOs) in public service delivery across nine rural local government areas (LGAs) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The research analyzed CBO contributions and limitations regarding healthcare, education, water, sanitation and livelihood services through surveys with 390 community members alongside interviews with CBO leaders. Testing four hypotheses and synthesizing prior studies provided further analytical rigor.

The findings reveal CBOs make moderately positive contributions expanding access, but face acute sustainability constraints from financial and capacity deficits (Tables 5 & 7). While CBOs improved availability of basic healthcare, education and clean water (mean ratings 2.53 to 2.93), communities viewed them as overstretched and unable to meet all needs due to limited staff and infrastructure (means 2.98 to 3.33). Interview data underscored heavy CBO reliance on scarce, short-term donor grants and community fundraising (Thematic Analysis). Metrics significantly underperformed sustainability benchmarks (Table 11, $p < 0.01$). Quantitative and qualitative data converged regarding high service gaps exceeding global standards (Table 10), signaling extensive unmet welfare needs.

Financial viability challenges constrained CBOs from addressing wider deprivations like secondary school access, farming support and skill-building prioritized by communities (Table 6). The

findings corroborate studies across Sub-Saharan Africa highlighting CBO difficulties attaining organizational stability, technical competencies and upward accountability amid overdependence on transient project funding from external patrons (Alatinga & Fielmua, 2011; Idachaba, 2019). While community goodwill sustains CBOs daily functioning, systemic capacity building is essential for effectiveness and sustainability (Khan & Swapan, 2020; Nwuba et al., 2020).

Positively, surveyed CBO youth and water initiatives demonstrated scalability potential with adequate state investment (Table 8). Cost-benefit analyses endorsed the feasibility for state-funded expansion of these targeted interventions to reach 20,000 more people if political barriers can be overcome (Table 12). The promise of selective community-designed models has been affirmed in contexts like Bangladesh, where localized CBO clinics tripled basic healthcare usage compared to centralized facilities (Khan & Swapan, 2020). Embracing such grassroots solutions through enabling policies and partnerships with government is underscored (Soomro et al., 2019).

While findings cannot infer causality from correlations, they consistently highlight CBOs' effectiveness depends on securing consistent financing and technical skills support. Statistically significant divergence between community-defined needs and formal provision spotlights policy gaps (Table 10). Qualitative themes around capacity building, partnerships and participatory governance provide pathways for redress (Thematic Analysis). With adequate organizational strength, resource pluralism and networks, calibrated CBO models can sustainably expand services reducing place-based marginalization (Begum et al., 2019).

In sum, the triangulated evidence underscores CBO potential while foregrounding financial and capacity vulnerabilities that impede scale, quality and alignment with community expectations. Secure resourcing through partnerships and grassroots policy reforms are vital. The study provides a reference for policy actors to judiciously strengthen collaborative interventions responding to the protracted public service gaps entrenching localized poverty.

Summary of Findings

The key findings of the study based on the quantitative and qualitative data as well as hypothesis testing are as follows:

CBOs have played important but limited roles in expanding access to basic services like healthcare, education and clean water in rural Akwa Ibom. However, deficiencies in funding, infrastructure, staff and organizational capacity constrain efforts to meet wider community needs (Tables 5-7, Thematic Analysis). Significant public service gaps exist around secondary education, agriculture, transportation, skill training programs relative to basic global standards, indicating extensive unmet welfare needs (Table 10). The financial sustainability of CBO models is significantly below established benchmarks, threatened by overreliance on scarce donor grants versus long-term financing strategies or partnerships (Table 11). Select CBO initiatives around youth training, localized health access and clean water demonstrated potential for scalable impact with adequate state investment in confronting political and fiscal barriers (Tables 8 & 12).

IV. Conclusions

In conclusion, the study found CBOs make important grassroots contributions to public service availability amidst state delivery failures. However, organizational limitations regarding technical skills, infrastructure and reliable financing severely constrain efforts to address wider community development needs and priorities in a sustainable manner. Tapping CBO potential requires targeted state investments and partnerships coupled to policy reforms enabling participatory localized innovation.

V. Recommendations

The following policy recommendations emerge from the study to strengthen CBOs' role in public service delivery:

Establish matching grant schemes to fund CBO proposals addressing key service gaps identified through grassroots consultations.

Build CBO management capacity on technical areas like financial planning, monitoring practices and grant applications to bolster organizational resilience.

Explore public-private partnerships via corporate social responsibility to provide 5-year funding commitments supporting scaled up CBO initiatives with proven community impacts.

Set up participatory policy forums for CBOs to provide direct inputs into local development planning and implementation processes.

Designate CBO liaison officers within government agencies to streamline collaboration. Provide start-up infrastructure to incubate promising CBO interventions.

Limitations

The limitations of the study provide qualifications regarding interpretation and generalizability of the findings:

The cross-sectional quantitative survey data cannot determine definitive causal relationships between variables over time.

Qualitative data is context specific, though findings revealed many common CBO experiences reported across Sub-Saharan African rural settings.

Convenience sampling means the households surveyed may not represent all segments of the target population within communities.

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