

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rural Development (Poverty and Inequality in the Rural Area): A Study of Esukmbat and Esinufoteyamba in Edem Odo Clan of Akpabuyo Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The participatory rural appraisal and rural development study embarked upon by PhD students of the Department of Public Administration, University of Calabar, Calabar, was conducted in Esuk Mbat and Esin Ufot Eyamba in Edem Odo Clan of Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study utilizes the descriptive statistics to analyze its data. It was observed that the problem of poverty, unemployment, low-income generation, insecurity and social vices were common place in the rural communities investigated. Indeed, the incidence of poverty remains very high with the dearth of health care facilities, schools, tarred roads, standard markets, and good drinking water, among others. This implies that the rural underdevelopment of these rural community has reached unprecedented rate, resulting to a very low standard of living for the rural folks. Besides, the concern has been that rural poverty has become infectious, leading the rural folks to experience chains of rural impoverishment. It is on this premise that policy prescriptions were recommended.

Keywords: Participatory Rural Appraisal, Rural development, Poverty, Inequality, Rural Area.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the distinctive futures and characteristics of the rural area such as the closeness to nature, affordable life style disposition to culture and tradition and abundant natural resources which is absent in the urban area. Yet in the 21st century the ugly and pathetic condition of the rural populace had become more deplorable and is unacceptable, rather than harnessing the numerous resources for the development of the rural area and also improving the lives and conditions of the people in any ways. Instead, the development of the rural area has been left to chance and to the hands of time. The opposite is what is obtainable in other parts of the world, precisely the developed countries. The development of the rural area in developed countries is purposively engaged by the government. This conscious effort is not without the acknowledgement of the potential gains in doing so; such as leisure/relaxation tourism and most especially for town planning i.e. to control the rate of rural urban migration which will help assuage the rising and continuous problems associated with urbanization like in the case with Nigeria. Urbanization does not have a corresponding positive impact on the lives of the masses and on the socio-economic conditions of the citizens.

From the backdrop, the Nigerian rural society is christened "poverty and low life" there is obviously a misnomer and a misrepresentation by all standard contrary to the beliefs of some person especially in the developed countries. In its proper perspective, a rural area is not necessarily occupied by the poor or low lives; it is basically a settlement of people outside the metropolis of the state. According to Safeopedia (2017) a rural area is an area of land outside the densely populated urban areas in a town or city. Similarly, Lisa and Cohn (2015), opined that the term "rural" is not easy to define. Perhaps the most obvious characteristic of rural communities is low population density relative to more urban area. From the definitions above and other definitions by several other scholars, non suggest or describes the rural area in the way and manner in which it is being portrayed as a dumping ground for "poverty stricken" areas; the major reason for the abandonment of the rural sector and its development to chance and to grow from the organic point of view.

One distinct similarity with all the scholars in the definition of a rural area that is vivid is "low population density and a geographical location outside the urban areas". As a matter of fact, the rural area while they have low population density they are blessed with large landmass which have put them in a position of being the goose that lays the golden egg as far as food and raw material and other natural resources are concerned. So, in the real sense of it, the rural area is not poor but suffers neglect in the hands of the government which is more or less the reason for the hardship, poverty and the gross inequality suffered at that level. With all of this we are rather not surprised in the 21st century how there had been massive rural-urban migration which further worsen the socio-economic conditions of the rural are.

In the developed societies the rural area has witnessed tremendous emigration into the rural area either on temporal or permanent basis that is urban-rural migrations for the purposes of tourism business, and residence more especially. People travel from rural areas to work in cities and return back to their homes at the rural area on a daily basis, because there is adequate good road network and infrastructure. Retiree deliberately retires to the rural area after their length of service in government and business because they find the rural environment conducive. This is not the case with the Nigeria situation, in recent times majority of retiree rather build retirement houses in the city to live permanently and avoiding the rural areas, this is not unconnected with the security challenges that is prevalent in most of the Nigerian rural societies, coupled with the absence of other basic amenities present in the cities. This outcome has made the population of the rural area scanty in some cases almost deserted and poses some challenges on the economic lives of the people as there is continuous lack of power.

Scholars have attributed the present state of Nigerian rural societies to be primarily the cause of government. According to Eteng (2005) rural development in Nigeria constitute a fundamental problem over the years, rural development has been neglected. Rural areas are regarded as abode of diseases, superstition, poverty lethargy, low income and low productivity. This problem, which is primarily due to government non-sustainable policy action towards rural transformation, is responsible for the poor state of affairs among rural dwellers in Nigeria. In the same vein Takeuchi (2005) is of the opinion that the need for active rural development policies has become imperative in addressing development issues as three quarters of the world impoverished lives of people is in the rural area. The above postulation corroborates the fact that the problems faced by the rural populace such as poverty, inequality as compounded by the socio-economic disparity is not without attributes to the government's lack of political will.

Emerging findings and extant literatures review revealed that the condition of most rural areas in Nigeria in Cross River State to be precise, have been so retarded and impoverished as backward as one hundred years ago in the 21st century. The most surprising thing is that some of these rural settlements are not far apart from the metropolis or capital of the state yet no trickle effect and impact of development on this rural area. Some rural settlements do not have any school in their communities and will have to trek 4-5 kilometers away to locate schools in other communities or semi-urban areas, no primary health centers (PHC) talk less of hospital, pregnant

women only give birth through the traditional birth attendant (TBA). There is need for government intervention as the women are vulnerable due to global warming. No motor-able road, thereby reducing the rate of commercial activities and agricultural production and marketing/transporting of farm produce. There is also high teenage pregnancies and school dropouts among the youths. For instance, 19 out of 25 youths are school dropouts which depict high level of illiteracy. There are basically no presence of essential amenities and infrastructure such as pipe-borne water as they drink from streams, no electricity, no good roads, and no financial institution like the micro finance bank, no hostels and other recreational centers. The people at the rural area are alive but almost nonexistent given their present social and economic existentiality which predisposes them to high mortality rate during child birth. It is obvious therefore, that the eradication of poverty and inequality at the rural areas of the Nigerian society is basically the responsibility of the government. A purposeful government should conscientiously implement all accurately formulated policies that are geared towards socio-economic development of the people failure to do so will keep the rural area perpetually in this level of squalor. It is against this background that this Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and rural development study was embarked upon in Esuk Mbat and Esin Ufot Eyamba in Edem Odo Clan of Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Agriculture and rural development

It is common knowledge that agriculture, the oldest occupation in the world is still the fulcrum upon which rural economies revolve. It is not only the source and guarantor of food supply and industrial raw materials; it is also the main source of employment and the driver of rural development. Most people in rural communities are in one way or the other engaged in agriculture because it is the main economic activity but that is not enough to say that those people are gainfully employed. The same is the case in Esuk Mbat and Esin Ufot Eyamba communities in Edem Odo clan of Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State. The rurality of these two communities is not in context because of the low population of literate persons, abundance of un-utilized farmland and remoteness from urban centers. Many people in these communities are engaged in agriculture, yet there is food insufficiency because of low output of farm produce and absence of mechanized farming; there is poverty because they earn little income from the sales of their produce and most importantly, there is high level of unemployment because they are mainly subsistence farmers, with each person working in his own farm. To corroborate this and hit the nail on the head, Una (2019) affirmed that quite a number of factors have combined to keep a large number of people poor and downtrodden in Cross River State against the obvious fact that the state is endowed with diverse and rich natural resources. Agricultural produce like rice, cassava, yam, cocoa, plantain, banana maize, among others, are produced in large quantities every year, yet so many people still strive to survive in many households. This is occasioned by the low prices middlemen pay for the produce, bad network of rural roads, frequent communal clashes and lack of employment for youths.

The kind of agricultural activities the people of Esuk Mbat and Esin Ufot Eyamba communities engage in, does not encourage agricultural and non-agricultural employment unlike some places where agriculture employs big portion of the labor force. Profit is the main cause of starting a trade, and a decline in the profit margin will definitely affect the continuity and expansion of that trade. Farmers in these communities are still using traditional farm technology, which is a reflection of stagnation and lack of government attention in terms of agricultural policies and programs that are capable of boosting agricultural activities to such a level that it can create employment, reduce poverty and enhance rural economy.

The Rural Development Report (RDR) of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) dated June 18, 2019 stated that: "when economic opportunities in an area

are limited, programs and policies aimed at helping rural youth will generally be ineffective. In other words, it is not enough to introduce rural youth policies and programs; rather, these policies and programs must function within constrained local opportunity structures and align with a broader rural development agenda” (Kabani 2019:1).

There is no seemingly possibility of yielding to a profound change from this pattern of agribusiness even with the knowledge that it will engender socio-economic stability and employment creation. This is because of what Bogdanov and Vasilgevic (2011: 49) referred to as the agrarian farm structure, which consist of micro farms owned by poor farmers or successors of privatized farmlands, small semi subsistence farms, large family farms located at the outskirts of community living area as well as private properties with mixed ownership structure. The case of these two communities is different. They are blessed with large expanse of arable land, which can be used for large scale agribusiness. They also have river, of which it's content especially fish can be explored, harnessed and developed to generate employment and income for the local people and beyond. Nonetheless, we cannot overrule the necessity of agro-based industrial setup. Government must reconsider the location of some industries especially the ones that have the capacity to transform farm produce to secondary product and the ones that conserve those outputs for later consumption. This will help reduce poverty, generate employment and engender rural development.

Unemployment and rural development

Ukwuije (2018) noted that the concept of unemployment exists in every economy even though it lacks one central definition. More contentious about the concept is that scholars are still not in agreement on the average period of time one can be without a job before he can be regarded as unemployed. However, one fundamental thing about the concept is that, it is a situation where those who are within the working age, willing and able to work could not secure a well-paying job. From that period, they are regarded as unemployed until they secure a job and begin to earn meaningful income. More authoritatively, the International Labor Organization (ILO) as quoted in the CBN Annual Report (2010:140) defined unemployment as the proportion of the labor force which was available for work but did not work for at least one hour in the week preceding the survey period. In the two communities under reference, unemployment rate is high, thereby giving credence to 2021 statistical report of the National Bureau of Statistics, which states that Cross Rivers State has an unemployment rate of 53.65 per cent with a total unemployed number of 998,203 and underemployment rate of 17.81 percent. The State has a working age population of 2,531,503 and a labor force of 1,860,552. According to the report, 53,024 worked for 40hours+, 331,325 worked for 20-39 hours, 314,315 worked for 1-19hours while 683.888 did nothing (ThisDay 2021). The rate of unemployment and underemployment are indicative of the existence of idle capacity in these communities, although "the classicalists hold that idle capacity does not exist due to the interplay of the forces of supply and demand to bring about a situation of equilibrium in an economy given the flexibility of wages" (Inyang, Arikpo and Ndiyo 2015: 66). But the situation here is different because there is absence of industries and investment; underutilization of natural resources, and highly paying job opportunities. Therefore, it is meaningless to talk about situation of equilibrium and flexibility of wages owing to ""the failures to put to effective use an important factor of production which is labour (Aiyedogbon & Ohwofasa, 2012). When a man is unemployed and hungry, the tendency of using him for electoral manipulations and political thuggery is surer (Lane, 1989:33).

Politics and rural development

In politics, nothing is as important as number; a very important winning tool. It does not just determine who wins, it also tells whose voices are being heard in politics and government and whose are not. It helps to cover the whimsical decisions and actions of the electoral body and the manipulations of the electoral process by the politicians. Large population on the side of the

government helps to cover maladministration and in-capabilities of the ruling class (Berkel, 2017:1). Contemporary politics is to a large extent conducted through numbers: numeracy is believed to serve as a stimulus to democratic discourse and civic decision making, while politicians are expected to convey correct and exact numerical data as their ability to do so vouches for their accountability, objectivity and expertise—core values of democratic leadership crucial for political trust in society.

Political representation is rotational among the sixteen (16) communities that make up the Edem Odo clan, which Esuk Mbat and Esin Ufot Eyamba communities are part of, but there is little or nothing to show in terms of democratic dividends in these communities. There is no office belonging to a politician through whom the community can easily have access to him or make complaint and rarely do they interface with their political office holders on issues bordering the people, possibly in a town-hall meeting, hence the low political consciousness among the people of the Esuk Mbat and Esin Ufot Eyamba communities. It is fashionable at this point to say that political participation of majority of the people is limited to voting during elections and it is usually influenced using gift items, little cash and food stuff. This is because, they lack the right political consciousness, strength of choice and the collective sense of purpose to make their choice in elective positions and hold those elected accountable. The local people cannot make an effective demand for public policies and programs that will polish their economic interest, and position them where they can enjoy some publicly funded programs that can increase their skills and make them either employable or self-dependent. This is because of the marred relationship between them and their political office holders. Ascendance to political office is simply for self-enrichment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The welfare state perspective theory was adopted as a background to this study. The theory was originated in Germany by the Germany Chancellors, Otto Chancellor, but the theory was popularized by the British Economist, Professor Robert Keynes. The welfare state perspective theory emerged as part of the logic of industrialization and in response to the need of advanced capitalism. The theory is a product of the modernization of the society. The welfare state perspective theory is a way of governance in which the state or an established group of social institution provides basic economic security for its citizens. The government is responsible for the individual and social welfare of its citizens.

The theory hinged on the government whereby the state government project and promotes the economic and social well-being of its citizens based upon the principles of equal opportunity, equal distributor of wealthy and public responsibility for citizen to give themselves the minimal provisions for a good life. A sociologist T.H Marshal described the modern welfare state as a distinctive combination of democracy, welfare and capitalism. The welfare state is linked to the mixed economy; the state funds the government institutions for health care and education along with direct benefits given to individual citizens. Features of the welfare state include the provision of pensions and other social insurance for the elderly, vulnerable and the poorest of poor in the society.

This theory is borne out of the fact that it is linked and applicable to the local government system in Nigeria. The history of the local government system in Nigeria was established following the local government reform in 1976. The reasons for the establishment of the local government system were to bring government closer to the people, expand rapid development to the grassroots, recognition of the cultural diversity and the use of traditional political structures, political leadership training and the provision of services of the local levels. More importantly, the local administration is the third tier of government in Nigeria and has the capacity to run a welfare economy, provide jobs for the people, embark on infrastructural development, consolidating and developing the local economy.

The local economy would keep young and energetic people to remain in their local communities and protect the raw materials that can be used for industrialization in urban centers through the historical perspectives of local government was quite successful in providing job opportunities and making the atmospheres convenience for the people, but the joint account system that gives the state governors the leeway into local government finance is an ill-wind that has affected the economic fortunes of local government and until the local and state government is expunged, local government economic fortunes for the people would continue to dwindle and such affect the local governance of the people. This links economy and rural structure as it relates to rural appraisal were the economy and history of the local government structure is assessed.

The implication of the theory to the study lies in the fact that the government which has the responsibility to provide for the rural communities had failed to do that. By this theory, the local government has the obligation to utilize resources for the benefit of rural communities. It is the place of local government to provide the basic ingredients for rural development. Given that, the local government by its constitutional mandate and being closest to the rural people ought to have ensured equitable distribution of resources and ensure that Esuk Mbat and Esin Ufot Eyamba in Edem-odo clan of Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria is developed.

Methods

The study used the stratified and purposive sampling techniques to select the sample from the two villages of EsukMbat and Esin Ufot Eyamba in Edem-odo clan of Akpabuyo Local Government Area. In the study, Esuk Mbat community formed the first stratum while Esin Ufot formed the second stratum.

The selections of participants were first carried out per each community using purposive sampling method. That is, in each the villages, eligible participants were purposively selected and interviewed. Purposive sampling technique was appropriate because it is characterized by the use of judgment and deliberate effort to obtain representative sample from the rural community. Therefore, a total of 240 respondents participated in the study.

The study utilizes an interview method to elicit information from the respondents. The interview method was used because majority of the respondents were illiterates who couldn't read and write. To facilitate smooth and easy communication, the interview was basically done by the PhD students who understood and speak the Efik and Ibibio dialect of the people.

The interview was done after informed consent was obtained from them. The purpose was to ensure informed decision. Pseudonyms were also used to assure them of anonymity. The respondents were informed that they have the right to decide voluntarily whether to participate in the study or not without the risk of any treatment that is deleterious.

The data entry and cleaning were first done at each of the villages after which they were combined into one data set and were further cleaned. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of tables and simple percentages. The survey items at each village were assessed and their psychometric properties and other contextual issues examined. The analysis also took into consideration, variability in responses, experiences of respondents. The exploratory factor was also used to analyze the data.

Study locale

Esuk Mbat and Esin Ufot Eyambaare villages found within Ikot Edem Odo political ward in EdemOdo Clan of Akpabuyo Local Government Area. These two communities were thickly forested when the foremost founding father, King lyamba migrated from Creek town to settle there for fishing and farming activities. Having found the land to be arable, he thereafter brought his siblings (brothers) to stay around him. The tradition had it that the two communities were founded by two brothers

The people of Esuk Mbat and Esin Ufot Eyamba live by the creek. The people are predominantly farmers, fishermen and traders. They have good arable land for cultivation of both cash crops and food crops for economic sustainability and development. Their major cash crops are palm fruit and cassava but 70 per cent of the people operate under subsistence method which adversely contributed to increase poverty.

Culturally, they are Efik and play Ekpe and Obon as traditional cults and only the initiate has right to partake in any of their outing or play. They speak Efik, Ibibio and English fluently and interact and or socialize outside their territory especially in marriages. They also have good delicacies which make them unique in their own way. According to His Highness Chief Bassey Essien Bassey in oral interview, the population of the two communities combined is about 6000 (Census, 2006).

Moreover, Akpabuyo Local Government Area in which Esine Ufot Eyamba is situated was created out of Odukpani Local Government Area in 1991 and became autonomous in 27th August 1991. It is located in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State with headquarters in Ikot Nakanada. Geographically, the Local Government Area is bounded in the West by Calabar Municipality and Calabar South to the South by Bakassi LGA and to the East by the Republic of Cameroun. The Local Government Area has 260 villages grouped into 30 clans and ten political wards.

RESULTS

1. Economy

Table 1: Distribution of respondents' responses on their major occupations

Type of occupations	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Farming	110	45.8
Fishing	65	27.1
Art & craft works	23	9.6
Trading business	42	17.5
Total	240	100.0

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Table 1 indicates that 45.8 per cent of the responses were engaged in farming which implies that farming was the major occupation of the people. this was followed by 27.1 per cent of the total respondents who were into fishing. 17.5 per cent followed next in the line of their occupations while 9.6 per cent were engaged in art and craft work.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents' responses on their major cash/food crops

Cash/food crops	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Palm produce	81	33.8
Cassava	121	50.4
Cocoa	12	5.0
Yams	26	10.8
Total	240	100.0

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Analysis of responses to Table 2 indicates that the major food crop in the area is cassava with 50.4 per cent of respondents engaged in it. It was followed by palm produce with 33.8 per cent of the respondents in it. Yam production followed next with 10.4 per cent while cocoa production came last with 5 per cent of the respondents engaged in it.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents' responses on their average income per annum

Average income per annum (₦)	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Less than 100,000	109	45.4
101,000 – 200,000	88	36.7
201,000 – 300,000	29	12.1
301,000 and above	14	5.8
Total	240	100.0

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

The pattern of responses to the average income of farmers shows that 45.4 per cent of the respondents earned less than ₦100,000 which implies subsistence form of living was predominant in the area. This was followed by 36.7 per cent of respondents who earned between ₦101,000 and ₦200,000. Those who earned between ₦201,000 and ₦300,000 were 12.1 per cent while only 5.8 per cent of the total respondents earned ₦301,000 and above.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents' responses on properties owned by the richest man in the village

Property owned by rich man	Yes	No	Don't know
Owned bank account	111 (50.4%)	110(45.8%)	19(7.9%)
Built a modern concrete house	207(86.3%)	29(12.1%)	4(1.7%)
Owned a car	171(71.3%)	60(25%)	9(3.8%)
Have a graduate	71(29.6%)	164(68.3%)	5(2.1%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

The pattern of responses to the properties owned by the richest man in the village shows that nearly all the respondents agreed that the rich man has built a concrete modern house. It was also indicated that the rich man owned a car. On whether the rich man had a bank account tend to be hypothetical as the response pattern was almost the same.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents' responses on the social infrastructures in the village

Social infrastructures	Yes	No	Don't know
Microfinance bank	37(15.4%)	188 (78.3%)	15(6.3%)
Pipe borne water	-	203(84.6%)	37(15.4%)
Health care	145(60.4%)	80(33.3%)	15(6.3%)
Primary school	155(64.6%)	74(30.8%)	11(4.6%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Table 5 indicates that the social infrastructures available in the village were health care center and primary school with 60.4 per cent and 64.6 per cent of the total respondents in agreement respectively.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents' responses on the luxury goods they owned

Luxury goods	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Radio	61	25.4
Motor cycle	109	45.4
Television	42	17.5
Bicycle	28	11.7
Total	240	100.0

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Analysis of responses in Table 6 shows that only 25.4 per cent of the total respondents owned radios. 45.4 per cent have motor cycles while 17.5 per cent and 11.7 per cent had television and Bicycles respectively.

2. Health care

Table 7: Distribution of respondents' responses on the number of PHCs

Number of PHCs	Yes	No	Don't know
None	-	-	-
One	2(0.8%)	190(79.2%)	48(20%)
Two	15(6.3%)	140(58.3%)	75(31.3%)
Three & above	206(85.8%)	19(7.9%)	15(6.3%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

From the foregoing, the data indicate that the village had more than three primary health care (PHCs).

Table 8: Distribution of respondents' responses on the type of PHCs

Type of PHC	Yes	No	Don't know
Maternity home	12(5%)	133(55.4%)	95(39.6%)
Private health clinic	216(90%)	14(5.8%)	10(4.2%)
Cottage hospital	2(0.8%)	218(90.8%)	20(8.3%)
Dispensary	8(3.3%)	207(86.3%)	25(10.4%)
Health center	215(89.6%)	12(5%)	13(5.4%)
TBAs	214(82.3%)	16(6.7%)	1(0.4%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Analysis of responses in Table 8 indicate that the type of PHCs in the village were private health clinics, health center and traditional birth attendants (TBAs).

Table 9: Distribution of respondents' responses on available health care personnel

Health care personnel	Yes	No	Don't know
Medical doctor	-	239(99.6%)	1(0.4%)
Trained midwives	-	223(92.9%)	17(7.1%)
TBAs	232(96.7%)	8(3.3%)	-
Nurses	150(62.5%)	82(34.2%)	8(3.3%)
Unskilled health workers	225(93.8%)	12(5%)	3(1.3%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Table 9 indicates that medical doctors and trained midwives were not available in the village PHCs, rather, it was TBAs, nurses and unskilled health workers were very much available.

Table 10: Distribution of respondents' responses on the rate of deaths/mortality

Mortality rate	High	Moderate	Low
Infant mortality	7(2.9%)	11(45.8%)	222(92.5%)
Maternal mortality	15(6.3%)	36(15%)	189(78.8%)
Adult mortality	58(24.2%)	127(52.9%)	55(22.9%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Analysis of the responses in Table 10 shows that infant and maternal mortality rates in the village was low while on the other hand, the adult mortality was moderate.

Table 11: Distribution of respondents' responses on forms of epidemic in the village

Type of epidemics	Yes	No	Don't know
Ebola	-	211(87.9%)	29(12.1%)
Covid-19	-	203(84.6%)	37(15.4%)
Hepatitis	-	218(90.8%)	22(9.2%)
Bird flu	-	198(82.5%)	42(17.5%)
HIV/AIDS	21(8.8%)	212(88.3%)	7(2.9%)
Others	43(17.9%)	181(75.4%)	16(6.7%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Analysis of responses in Table 11 shows that had really not experienced any epidemic that calls for medical attention.

Table 12: Distribution of respondents' responses on their sources of drinking water

Sources of drinking water	Yes	No	Don't know
Pipe borne water	-	-	-
River	52(21.7%)	188(78.3%)	-
Bore hole	42(17.5%)	198(82.5%)	-
Streams /springs	228(95%)	12(5%)	-

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Table 12 indicates that the villagers depended on streams/springs as their major sources of drinking water.

3. Education

Table 13: Distribution of respondents' responses on available educational institutions

Educational institutions	Yes	No	Don't know
Primary school	-	240(100%)	-
Secondary school	-	235(97.9%)	5(2.1%)
Higher education	-	-	-
Others	-	-	-

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Table 13 indicates that there was no educational institution in the area.

Table 14: Distribution of respondents' responses on the rate of school attendance of village children

Rate of school attendance	High	Moderate	Low
Girl child education	30(12.5%)	7(2.9%)	203(84.6%)
Out of school children	224(93.3%)	10(4.2%)	6(2.5%)
School enrolment	5(2.1%)	80(33.3%)	155(64.6%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Analysis of the responses in Table 14 shows that the rate of "out of school children" was high with 93.3 per cent. The analysis however indicated that the girl child education and the school enrolment were generally low.

Table 15: Distribution of respondents' responses by number of NCE and graduate teachers in the village

Items	Yes	No	Don't know
None	12(5%)	133(55.4%)	95(39.6%)
1-5	216(90%)	14(5.8%)	10(4.2%)
6-10	2(0.8%)	218(90.8%)	20(8.3%)
11 and above	8(3.3%)	207(86.3%)	25(10.4%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021.

Analysis of data in Table 15 indicated that the number of NCE and graduate teachers in the village were between 1 and five of them.

Table 16: Distribution of respondents' responses by estimated cost of school fees between public and private schools

Items	Low	High
Public schools	224(93.3%)	16(6.7%)
Private schools	7(2.9%)	233(97.1%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021.

Analysis of responses in Table 16 indicated that 93.3 per cent of respondents agreed that the estimated cost of school fees for public schools in the area was low while only 6.7 per cent stated it was high. On the other hand, 97.1 per cent of the total respondents stated that the estimated cost of fees for private schools was high while only 2.9 per cent stated it was low. It implies therefore that the estimated cost of fees for private schools was higher than that of public schools in the study area.

4. COVID-19

Table 17: Distribution of respondents' responses on the awareness level of COVID-19

Awareness level	High	Low
Use of face masks	18(48.7%)	222(92.5%)
Social distancing	51(21.3%)	189(78.8%)
Hand sanitizers	55(22.9%)	185(77.1%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Analysis of the responses in Table 17 shows that the awareness level as regard COVID-19 protocol adherence in terms of use of face masks, social distancing and hand sanitizing were low.

Table 18: Distribution of respondents' responses on the challenges of COVID-19 lockdown

Challenges	Yes	No	Don't know
Ignorance	216(90%)	14(5.8%)	10(4.2%)
No proper education	189(78.8%)	36(15%)	15(6.3%)
No contact with outside world	58(24.2%)	127(52.9%)	55(22.9%)
Cannot afford sanitizers and face masks	222(92.5%)	11(4.8%)	7(2.9%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Analysis of the responses in Table 18 shows that the challenges confronting the villages during the COVID-19 lockdown were issues of ignorance and lack of proper education about the pandemic. It also indicated that the villagers were unable to make contact with the outside world in terms of restricted movement. Besides, they were unable to buy and use face masks and sanitizers, since these things could not be produced in the village.

5. Political awareness

Table 19: Distribution of respondents' responses by their political awareness

Political awareness	Yes	No	Don't know
Any political stalwart in the village	174(72.5%)	56(23.3%)	10(4.2%)
Any councilor	-	65(27.1%)	175(72.9%)
Any state house of Assembly member	-	217(90.4%)	23(9.6%)
Member, house of Reps.	-	198(82.5%)	42(17.5%)
Any Senate member	-	159(66.3%)	81(33.8%)
Any party office	-	121(50.4%)	119(49.6%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Table 19 indicates that the level of awareness is low. For example, with the exception of having political stalwarts, no villager had occupied any political office.

6. Security

Table 20: Distribution of respondents' responses on security matters in the area

Security matters	Yes	No	Don't know
Any police post		196(81.7%)	44(18.3%)
Any Akpakwu post	-	176(73.3%)	64(26.7%)
Any vigilante policing	217(90.4%)	20(8.3%)	3(1.3%)
Any recent kidnapping	-	209(87.1%)	31(12.9%)
Other criminal activities		150(62.5%)	90(37.6%)

Source: Village tour of Eyamba village by PhD students, 2021

Table 19 indicates that apart from village vigilante policing that exist in the village, there were no police post or Akpaku post in the village. Data further revealed that there was relative peace in the village, as there was no incidence of kidnapping or major criminal activities.

DISCUSSION

The rural community of Esuk Mbat and Esin Ufot Eyamba in Edem Odo clan of Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria has peculiar challenges as observed in the course of this study. These include: lack of political representation at the state and National levels. Socially, the rural community suffered from lack of social amenities/facilities such as public schools (Secondary/Primary). There is no health post or health center/clinic, and no electricity. There was lack of safe drinking water system as well as high level of insecurity. Educationally, there were no schools (Primary/Secondary) around the community resulting to pupils/student trekking long distances to attend school in another community known as Ikot Edem Odo. This posed serious challenges especially to girl child education considering the vulnerability of girls in an unsecured environment. This also resulted to girl children dropping out of schools due to early pregnancy and consequently early marriage at school age of 12 years. However, many school children dropped out of school due to poverty. This scenario contributed to high poverty rate, inequality and unemployment with its attendant consequences of social vices.

Unfortunately, the communities also suffered from lack of medical facilities and medical personnel as there was no public hospital, health post or clinic except the only one located along Akpabuyo-Ikang road with non-residential health personnel. Often times, these medical personnel do not come to work/duty thereby leaving the patients hopeless at critical times. There exist only one Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA) by name: Mrs Augusta Effiom Ekpo who had been playing significant roles in attending to women in labor and child births. It was also observed that even at critical times, there would be no medical personnel to render help. The TBA attested that God has been her helper and she has never received any formal training having practiced this for the past thirty years. Nevertheless, she added that she had no difficulty during her thirty years of practice and government has never recognized or appreciated her.

On public water supply, there is no pipe borne water in the community and everybody drinks from the stream except 2 percent of well blessed people that have their private boreholes. Lack of safe drinking water has contributed to outbreak of diseases especially during dry season. In terms of security challenges, there is no police station even around the adjoining communities. This necessitated the youths of the area to group themselves into vigilante groups to secure lives and properties. It is pertinent to note that, there is no electricity in the community. This also

contributed to low businesses among youths who would have engaged themselves in productive ventures.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This participatory rural appraisal and rural development study revealed that the rural community of Esuk Mbat and Esin Ufot Eyamba in Edem Odo clan of Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria had been experiencing rural impoverishment and underdevelopment. In other words, rural development had not taken place in this rural community due to neglect and abandonment by the government. The rural people were unfairly neglected because the local government councils failed to undertake rural community development projects and programs that would have been of benefit to the rural people.

On the basis of these findings, it is recommended that the indigenes of this rural community should endeavor to embark on self-help and community development projects to help themselves. There should stop waiting for government to do or provide basic infrastructures for them. However, the government, especially the Akpabuyo Local Government Council should as a matter of necessity pursue rural transformation agenda for these rural communities. The rural people should be empowered and the provision of a conducive and secured environment made. Besides, adequate efforts should be made towards providing infrastructures and social amenities that will boost socio-economic developments in the rural community.

There should also be development and improvement in agricultural ventures not only for subsistence but also for sales. The participation in agriculture will encourage the rural folks of this community to improve their standard of living. Efforts of Akpabuyo Local Government Council should not only be directed towards collecting taxation from the people but also to the provision of social services like good water, basic health facilities, environmental sanitation, town halls, schools, electricity, water supply to rural people.

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