

Coping with Infrastructural Deprivation through Collective Action among Rural People in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The failure of the state to address the problems of rural infrastructure in rural areas of Nigeria led to the adoption of self-governing techniques by the people through collective action. The study shows that rural people organized themselves based on appropriate institutional arrangements, mutual agreements and shared understanding; and planned and executed public goods and services that directly touched the lives of their people. The paper found that rural communities in south-western Nigeria through self-organized arrangements provided rural facilities at the cost of ₦26,204,000.00 (\$1,546,071.7) (i.e. 98.3%) of the total figure thus constituting the prime mover for rural facilities development, while Local Governments contributed ₦450,000.00 (\$20,452) (i.e. 1.7%) on the same facilities. The concern is that if these institutions are so accountable to their members, we should begin to conceptualize how they can be used to re-constitute order from the bottom up and to complement the state structure of governance.

Keywords: infrastructural deprivation, coping, collective action

INTRODUCTION

The majority of Nigerians live in rural areas, with an average settlement having 5,000 or less inhabitants. The Nigerian population census of 1963 shows that 80.7% of Nigerians live in such settlements (Olatunbosun 1975). An estimate for Nigeria's rural population in 1985 was 70% of an estimated total national population of approximately 100 million (World Bank 1987: 202,266), while the figure for 1995 was 61% (World Resources 1997: 150). But the rural dwellers are less vocal; therefore, they are more or less neglected. The rural area is characterised by a culture of poverty, as most people still live barely above subsistence level.

The role of infrastructural facilities in grassroots development and poverty reduction cannot be over-emphasised whether in urban or rural environments. McNeil (1993) shows that adequate infrastructure reduces the costs of production, which affects profitability, levels of output, and employment. When infrastructure works, productivity and labour increase. When it does not work, citizens suffer, particularly the poor. Thus, economic renewal and societal welfare become postponed or halted.

According to the World Bank (1997), the number of rural poor in Nigeria is roughly twice that of the urban poor. The depth of poverty (i.e. the average shortfall from the poverty line) is more than double in rural areas. Rural areas in Nigeria are generally deprived of the basic needs of life such as clothing, housing, medical care, postal communication, education, transport facilities, recreation, neighbourhood amenities, credit facilities and horizon for self-improvement. Studies in Nigeria show a high degree of inequality in income distribution (Modupe 1986: 2; World Bank 1997: 8) and in the provision of socio-economic opportunities and facilities between rural and urban areas (Mabogunje 1977; Stewart 1985) in which the rural area is less favoured. According to the World Bank (1997), the average per capita expenditure of a poor rural household in Nigeria was one-fifth of the non-poor in 1992. Of the extremely poor, 85 percent lived in rural areas and more than two-thirds of them lived on farms. The infrastructural delivery arrangements at the local level point to the fact that the quality and quantum of infrastructural facilities are far from satisfactory.

One of the factors that explain the appalling conditions of rural infrastructure in Nigeria is the type of administrative and governance arrangements that the post-colonial independence leaders adopted. The arrangements were too centralized. It separated the state structure of governance from the people-oriented institutions. Thus, there was(is) a wide gap between state and society, as different cultural values prevail within the bureaucracy as against the rest of society. Invariably, the public officials became “polynormative”, and in many cases this translated into “normlessness” (Riggs 1962: 29–30). For instance, after independence, the Nigerian government, confident of the powers and potentials of central government departments to promote and mobilise development, eliminated all opposition to their administration and abolished the three-tier system of local government that had some connections with the indigenous institutions. Thus, the indigenous system of governance that had robust attributes of people-centred democracy was denigrated. Consequently, government attentions were directed at the few urban centres in terms of infrastructures and government edifices, while rural areas were neglected. It has been reported that the majority (90.0%) of the rural dwellers embarked on journey on untarred rural roads and 84.0% of them travelled on bad roads, which consumed more time than necessary. Since time is money, rural roads impoverished the rural dwellers in Nigeria (Akinola 2003: 19).

The official inadequacy in the provision of basic facilities in rural areas of developing countries is not limited to Nigeria alone. Other countries of the world, especially, developing countries (in Latin America, Asia, and Africa) such as Bolivia, Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, Malawi, Ghana, and Sri Lanka, to mention a few, have their own experiences of rural ‘neglect’. A notable experience in these countries is the adoption of self-help techniques by the affected local people at providing the basic facilities in their respective communities. The official inadequacy in the rural sector in Nigeria led the rural populace to revive their old traditions and lay emphasis on collective action and

shared strategies to solve problems of infrastructural deprivation. Research findings in Nigeria confirm the achievements of community-based institutions in the delivery of essential goods and services (Olowu et. al. 1991; Akinola 1991; 1994; 2000; 2003; 2004; 2005; Adedeji and Onigu 1997).

This paper examines the evolution of collective action in some selected communities in south-western Nigeria. It also investigates the roles of rural dwellers (as a group) and the local government in the provision and maintenance of facilities.

1. COLLECTIVE ACTION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The theories of collective action suggest that individuals under certain institutional arrangements and shared norms are capable of organizing and sustaining cooperation that advances the common interest of the group in which they belong (Ostrom 1990). This line of thought recognizes that human beings can organize and govern themselves based on appropriate institutional arrangements and mutual agreements in a community of understanding. This is the fundamental of Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework. IAD believes in institutional arrangement designed by people who cooperate based on rules and constitution of their choice, and thereby are able to resolve socio-economic and political problems which other people (external to their conditions) are not capable of doing for them.

It considers the role of evolution, culture, learning and social norms in the discourse on collective action (Ostrom and Walker 2003). Institutional structures that people have developed over the years avail individuals in the community to make inputs to development in their locality by contributing towards projects (labour, finance and materials) and decision-making in political arenas in rural settings. According to Sawyer (2005: 3), institutional analysis helps us to better understand how individuals within communities, organizations and societies craft rules and organize the rule-ordered relationships in which they live their lives. To understand institutions, according to Ostrom (2005: 3), one needs to know what they are, how and why they are crafted and sustained, and what consequences they generate in diverse settings. Understanding institutions is a process of learning what they do, how and why they work, how to create or modify them, and eventually how to convey that knowledge to others.

Community institutions in Africa possessed self-organizing capabilities through which community members relate with one another in a rule-ordered relationship, sharing ideas, and using their own initiatives and institutional potentials to address problems of daily existence. Examples of local people's provision of public goods using available social capital (associations) are well documented throughout African continent (Smock 1971; Barkan, McNulty and Ayeni 1991; Olowu et. al. 1991; McGaffey 1992; Okotoni and Akinola 1996; IDS 2001; Akinola 2000; 2003; 2004; 2005). According to Hyden (2006), there

is a vibrant associational life in African societies with a strong sense of community among diverse peoples of Africa.

Similarly, Ayo (2002: xxv) emphasizes the role of indigenous structures of governance, as it exists in the various communities across Nigeria, which the people have come to refer to as *de facto* in ordering their lives and solving their problems. The tremendous success and achievement of Community Development Associations (CDAs) traverse culture, language and national boundaries. The CDA, as an institution, is gender neutral (Awotona and Akinola 1996). It is a universal key to grassroots development that decentralized democratic systems of administration have adopted in developed societies.

If we share with the collective action theories that institutions matter in terms of their influence on cooperation, then the questions are: What role does culture play in the evolution of collective action in south-western Nigeria? What kinds of incentives can promote cooperation and collective action? Further, if constitutional choice structures human relationships in some fundamental sense, how can constitutional institutions influence cooperation and collective action among the rural dwellers in south-western Nigeria? This paper attempts to answer some of these questions using empirical analysis of how communities are organized and how members relate to one another in rural areas of south-western Nigeria.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the course of generating data for this paper, ten Local Government Areas (LGAs) were surveyed across southwestern Nigeria and they are: Ife North, Ife South, Ife Central and Aiyedire LGAs in Osun State. Others are Badagry LGA, Lagos State; Emure LGA, Ekiti State; Akinyele LGA, Ogo-Oluwa LGA and Oorelope LGA in Oyo State; and Ifedore LGA, Ondo State. At the local government level, financial statistics were collected from local government officials to determine the contribution of these local governments to rural infrastructural development at the grassroots. At the community level, community leaders and leaders of community development associations (CDAs) were interviewed using interview guide to ascertain the degree of infrastructural provision by CDAs. Data were also collected on evolution of collective action, resources mobilisation strategy of community development associations, conditions of projects (completed, on-going and abandoned projects) and cost of projects. In addition, data were collected from two farmers' cooperative societies using interview guide.

Initially, 24 rural communities from three LGAs in Ife region of Osun State were studied between 1997 and 1999. The communities in Ife region are Agbaje, Alapata, Alutierin, Ara Joshua, Aye Coker, Eleja, Elekolo, Famia, Idera, Itabiye, Itamarun, Mefoworade, Odemuyiwa, Oku-omoni, Olode, Omifunfun, Oriokuta, Oyere Aborishade, Oyere Asujo, Sagi, Toba, Toro, Wanikin and Yekemi. The

result of the study prompted me to extend the study to other communities in other states in south-western Nigeria between 2001 and 2005. The second set of communities (outside Ife region) are Ile-Ogbo community, Aiyedire LGA, Osun State; Asheri and Akarakuma communities, Badagry LGA, Lagos State; Alabata, Aponmode and Isale-Awero communities, Akinyele LGA, Oyo State; Emure Community, Emure LGA, Ekiti State; Iwo-Ate Community, Ogo-Oluwa LGA, Oyo State; Igbope Community, Oorelope LGA, Oyo State; and Ijare Community, Ifedore LGA, Ondo State. However, in the course of the second phase of the study, some communities that were covered during the first phase were revisited to update data on them.

In the light of the discussions above, three key overarching factors central to collective action are discussed: the evolution of collective action; the democratic conditions underpinning collective action; and the contribution of Community Development Associations (CDAs) vis-à-vis that of the local governments in south-western Nigeria.

3. EVOLUTION OF COLLECTIVE ACTION IN SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

A survey of the public landscape of Yorubaland¹ before the British colonial occupation of the area confirmed that civic democracy as a daily practice and form of life was rooted in the Yoruba culture and social organization, which were based on mutual trust, reciprocity, and common understanding in rural communities. Social organizations among the Yoruba evolved on the basis of the different occupations they engaged in, which in turn were determined by the environment in which they found themselves. Nearly all events of life among the Yoruba are conceptually expressed in their language. The power of collectivity and group association are clearly illustrated and understood among the Yoruba through several expressions, among which are:

1. *Owo kan ko le gbe eru d'ori*. The literal meaning of this expression is: One hand cannot lift a load to the head but can be translated as: a tree can not make a forest.
2. *Agbajo owo l'a fi n so'ya*. This expression also literally means: it takes several hands of people to express confidence but can as well be translated as: it takes a joint effort to have an appreciable success in any endeavour.

The import of all these expressions is that the Yoruba people believe strongly in the power of collectivity and joint efforts that are based on contractual relationships and building of trust and reciprocity in their day-to-day existence. The joint efforts, however, require certain rules and laws. Without “the laws”, which may refer to institutions – the working rules of going concerns (Ostrom

¹ Yorubaland comprises the six states in southwestern Nigeria.

1990: 12) that will check individuals' excesses and free-riding, there is no basis for organization to exist in the first instance. Although these rules are not written down, they are already part of the people because their daily existence in all ramifications revolves around cooperation. The joint efforts of the Yoruba, right from the ages past, are invariably directed towards farming, hunting, building of houses, and finance.

At the level of guild or occupational association, social organizations among the Yoruba originated on the basis of the different types of occupations they engaged in, which required several hands to accomplish greater outputs than one person could have achieved. The foundation of associations and corporations is as old as the Yoruba race itself. The associations were formed, as in other places, for the purpose of promoting and protecting common interests in the field of politics, economics, religion, etc. The associations, in addition, had judicial functions as well as mutual help features as discovered in Ifetedo community (Akinola 1997: 98–99).

Besides, three distinct social organizations as forms of co-operations exist among the Yoruba which are: (1) *Aaro*, (2) *Owe*, and (3) *Esusu*.

- (1) *Aaro* is a cooperative system devoted for bush clearing or farm cultivation, including harvesting, and is strictly rotational among the group members.
- (2) *Owe* is applied, more often than not, to house construction and, occasionally, to harvesting of crops. It is based on the law of reciprocity described as: *Se fun mi kin se fun o* (Do to me and I do to you). The underlying principle of *owe* is trust.
- (3) *Esusu* applies to a group of people who come together to start a round of periodic (daily, weekly, monthly, market days) cash contributions that are then given to each member in turn until all members have had their turn.

The concept and practice of collective action as applied to occupational development was adopted at the community level. The efforts of individuals and various occupational groups are pooled for the accomplishment of major tasks at the community level. The underlying principles behind these social institutions are embedded in the power of collectivity, mutual trust, fair-play and shared strategy – and these specify those actions that are required and those that are prohibited.

For example, the constitution of Egbe-Omo-Elewe-Obi² in Ijare community of Ifedore LGA, Ondo State demonstrates how Yoruba people organized themselves through shared agreement and understanding. This community institution is generally called *Egbe* (association) and has an operational constitution, cited as The Constitution of Ijare Egbe-Omo-Elewe-Obi.

² The major occupation of the people of Ijare is cultivation of, and trading in kolanut (*Obi*), a cash crop. While *Egbe* means association, *omo-elewe-obi* means children of those who thrive on kolanut.

According to findings, the constitution was first adopted in 1965, and has since been reviewed and amended about three times: 1978, 1997 and December 2004.

3.1 DEMOCRATIC CONDITIONS UNDERPINNING COLLECTIVE ACTION IN SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

The governance structure of rural communities in the region is bi-polar. There is separation of powers between the *Baales* (Chiefs) of the communities and the CDAs. In matters relating to the overall governance of communities, especially the judicial and security, the *Baale* and his advisers take charge. However, on community development, there is a separate body headed by the chairman with his executive members, the treasurer, secretary, and public-relations officer who are also appointed or elected by the community members.

Resources mobilization is not an easy task in every society. Communities are divided into areas on the basis of the town of origin of the inhabitants. While the distinction is pronounced in some communities, it is not so in others. It is on the basis of the geographical division of the communities that resources mobilisation is pursued. Once a project is decided upon, resources (money, materials and labour) are allocated on the basis of the number of families in that community. The leader, usually the eldest or the first settler among a particular group in that community, is responsible for mobilizing his people for all the allotted contributions towards the accomplishment of the project. With this arrangement, defaulting is minimal, if not non-existent. Due to the culture of communalism already imbibed by the people and the common problem of infrastructural deprivation that tends to point them to their roots, it is rare to find someone who would not want to pay except in adverse circumstances such as sickness and loss of property to disaster. However, in case of extreme non-compliance, such matter is referred to the *Baale* (Chief) of the community. In such circumstance, public ignominy would be meted out to the defaulters. He may be asked to prostrate before a large crowd and then promise to pay his due. If he fails to redeem his promise (which is a debt), then he may be on his way out of the community by force.

Another method for raising fund in Yorubaland is through Community Day celebration, an annual event organized in most Yoruba communities. This event brings home sons and daughters of the community residing abroad. For instance, the annual Ijare National Day Celebration is the brain-child of the *Egbe* (association). The association is fully responsible for the Community Day celebration, moreover, when the Day has been a very good source of revenue for executing the association's projects. Findings show that over ₦2 million (\$14,815.00) was realized during the Ijare Day Celebration held in November, 2004.

The configuration of relationships that bind Yoruba people together under institutional and governance arrangement is cultural value. The organizational structure and management of these institutions is unique. Cultural values of the

people play an important role in the operational performance of these institutions. People have respect for their elders and leaders occupying positions of authority in the community and associations. This, however, does not mean that such elders/leaders are immune against sanction(s) if they err or flout the laid down or binding rules.

3.2 COLLECTIVE ACTION AND INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL NIGERIA

Human capabilities and local initiatives in rural area of south-western Nigeria provide alternative strategies for coping with the problem of infrastructural deprivation. The post-colonial disappointment the people have suffered in the hand of the state in the area of social services have made them to revive old traditions and pre-colonial governance heritage, thereby cooperating among themselves through the umbrella of community development associations. It is through this forum that appreciable level of services has been achieved, while local government contribution in this direction has been minimal. The four public goods that were covered in this paper are: roads, health, education and electricity; and they are discussed in turn.

3.2.1 Rural road projects

The amount of money spent on road maintenance varied from one community to another. Oriokuta community spent ₦70,000.00 (\$3,182.00) on road maintenance in 1995, while Famia community contributed and spent ₦50,000.00 (\$2,273.00), which was grossly inadequate for the Famia-Modakeke road project that was estimated at ₦150,000.00 (\$6,818.00). In Elekolo community, the people spent ₦50,000.00 (\$2,273.00) between February and March 1995 for road maintenance. Because the local government could not come to the aid of the people, the community decided to contribute money and awarded the project to two contractors at different times, who at the end of the day did sordid job. The community was disappointed and frustrated on the project.

Aponmode, Isale-Awero and Alabata communities in Akinyele LGA spent ₦1.4 million (\$16,648.3) on construction of culverts between 1996 and 2000 without any visible assistance from the LG. However, a philanthropist donated ₦200,000.00 (\$1,904.8) for these projects. Similarly, Ile-Ogbo in Aiyedire LGA constructed a bridge on River Osun in 1970 at the cost of ₦2 million (\$500,000.00) and several culverts on Ile-Ogbo/Gbongan/Ode-Omu road in 1982 at the cost of ₦1 million (\$125,000.00) without assistance from the LG. Igbope community in Oorelope LGA spent ₦85,000.00 (\$850.00) on opening of new roads at the outskirts of the community.

Although local governments budgeted for road development, such money was never spent as communities still had to pay for the cost of hiring tractors and other road equipment. For instance, between 1993 and 1995, Eiyentanle (with 4 km. road), Alapata (with 3.5 km. road) and Salami (with 4 km. road) in Ife North local government contributed ₦30,000.00 (\$1,364.00) each for hiring equipment for road projects. In addition, villagers still fed the operators and supplied fuel for the equipment. It was reliably gathered that the local government did not release its equipment, especially road grader, to operate in the rural area on the ground that it might break down. Similarly, Ara Joshua community in Ife South Local Government resorted to self-help efforts for road maintenance. The community normally hired a tractor from a private firm at the cost of ₦10,000.00 (\$455.00) per day, excluding fuelling the equipment and feeding the operator. Apart from this, like other communities, the community organised weekly road repair, using cutlasses and hoes for minor works.

3.2.2 Health facilities

Though the grassroots people were sidelined in the provision of health facilities by governments, the people felt since health is wealth there is no amount of money and energy devoted to health facilities that would be considered too much. Analysis shows that only five of the 14 health facilities (35.7%) in Ife region were provided by the local governments; community efforts represented the prime mover for the provision of health facilities in the region at the cost of ₦2.02 million (\$91,636.4). The problems facing most of these facilities, however, could be attributed to lack of staff and inadequate drug supply. What the people did was to provide the physical structures, while local government that was expected to supply staff and drugs failed in its responsibility.

Specifically, the people of Igbope and Iwo-Ate contributed ₦200,000.00 (\$50,000.00) and ₦60,000.00 (\$7,500.00) towards the building of dispensary in 1970 and 1983 respectively. Similarly, Alabata, Ile-Ogbo and Igbope communities devoted ₦250,000.00 (\$2,381.00), ₦410,000.00 (\$19,524.00) and ₦2.5 million (\$312,500.00) to the building of maternity center in 2000, 1992 and 1983–1987 respectively. The community institution in Ijare was instrumental to the establishment of the Comprehensive Health Centre in Ijare, and has since been supporting the centre in various ways. For instance, despite government take-over of the centre, the association had provided supports in so many ways such as provision of accommodation for doctors and nurses, provision of a functional borehole at the centre which cost the association some ₦120,000.00, and provision of electricity with a high-powered generating plant for the centre at the cost of ₦345,000.00.

It was also found that bad roads and lack of necessary health materials constituted a major obstacle to preventive health in rural areas. For instance, health education, periodical visits, immunisation, and chlorination of wells in rural areas by health officials were hindered by bad road conditions as officials

could not move freely, especially during the rainy season. Similarly, some essentials such as raincoat, boots, gloves, and First Aid Boxes were not provided for the officials by the local government councils.

3.2.3 Educational Facilities

The various communities studied placed a high premium on education and this spurred them in embarking on several educational projects ranging from building schools and library as well as award of bursary and scholarships. Educational facilities (primary and secondary schools) in rural area of Ife region were repaired by both the local government and the community dwellers. However, there were some dilapidated primary schools' structures that were used for teaching and learning. Analysis shows that communities' contributions towards the educational development especially in repairs and maintenance of schools constituted the lion's share, ₦1,834,000.00 (\$83,364.00) (i.e. 90.0%) of the total ₦2,038,500.00 (\$92,659.00). The local government spent ₦127,000.00 (\$5,773.00) (i.e. 6.2%) while both the local governments and the communities jointly spent ₦77,500.00 (\$3,523.00) (i.e. 3.8%).

Emure community spent ₦1.8 million (\$15,000.00) for the building of Model Secondary School from 2001 to 2005. The people of Iwo-Ate in Ogo-Oluwa LGA constructed a block of six classrooms with a staff room and one workshop in 1982 at the cost of ₦100,000.00 (\$12,500.00). Asheri and Akarakuma communities in Badagry LGA renovated a primary school at the cost of ₦300,000.00 (\$13,636.00) in 1995, while Ile-Ogbo community in Aiyedire LGA expended ₦1.5 million (\$187,500.00) on community high school in 1980. Igbope community spent ₦45,000.00 (\$2,143.00) on the construction of a mini-public library in 1991 and another ₦10 million (\$80,000.00) on the building of Community Comprehensive High School in 2002.

It is also noteworthy that Ijare community demonstrated a highly commendable performance in the area of education in recent time. It has supported many indigenes of the community to acquire higher education through scholarships and bursary awards. For instance, in the 2003/2004 academic session, the sum of ₦0.3 million (\$2,307.7) was disbursed to students in various tertiary institutions as bursary awards at ₦10,000.00 (\$76.9) per student. Similarly, another ₦0.3 million (\$2,307.7) was distributed as scholarships to awardees in Medicine, Engineering and the Sciences.

3.2.4 Electricity Supply

On rural electrification, findings show that all the communities in Ife region spent ₦190,000.00 (\$8,636.00) on electricity. However, as at the time of the survey, only Olode, Mefoworade and Omifunfun have functioning electricity. Each of the three communities contributed ₦50,000.00 (\$2,273.00) deposit, and the local government matched it with ₦70,000.00 (\$3,181.00) for each of the

three communities in Ife South. In Yekemi in Ife Central LG, community members contributed ₦50,000.00 (\$2,273.00), the LG contributed ₦38,000.00 (\$1,727.00) to connect the power line with the national grid, while the Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) funded the remaining part of the project. In July 1995, the LG paid ₦75,000.00 (\$3,409.00) to DFRRI as requested to replace stolen cables and the community started enjoying power supply. In Famia, electricity project was abandoned after the people had paid ₦40,000.00 (\$1,818.00) to DFRRI in 1993 and the Directorate promised to complete the project. Electricity poles were erected; however, DFRRI could not fulfil its promise for completion. Iwo-Ate and Isale-Awero communities spent ₦160,000.00 (\$7,619.00) and ₦200,000.00 (\$1,905.00) in 1993 and 2000 respectively without any financial assistance from the concerned local governments.

In sum, of a total of ₦26,254,000.00 (\$1,566,523.7) spent on various facilities in rural areas of south-western Nigeria, the sampled communities spent ₦26,204,000.00 (\$1,546,071.7) (i.e. 98.3%), while the local governments spent ₦450,000.00 (\$20,452) (i.e. 1.7%). The paltry amount contributed by the local governments could be described as grants, or 'pressure' money, that was released after a series of appeals by the people to the local government. Generally, such an amount is ridiculous, and not even regular. The contribution of local government towards rural infrastructure is appalling when one considers their huge monthly allocations from the federal government.

3.3 ANALYSIS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

Analysis of local government finance in the rural areas of Ife region shows that, on the average, each local government received a monthly allocation of ₦3.0 million (\$136,364.00) from the Federal Government and generated ₦45,000.00 (\$2,045.00) internally on monthly basis in 1995 yet the impact of these monies was negligible on the welfare of rural dwellers in the region. Similarly, internally generated revenue of these local governments was, on the average, ₦1,058,119.70 (\$8,139.40) per month between 2000 and 2004. This accounted for 2.0% of the total revenue generation for the whole period. The figures for Federal Allocation, Value Added Tax and Salary/Emoluments were ₦49,370,144.00, ₦3,142,659.50 and ₦9,542,345.60 respectively for the same period. It was found that after deduction of salary/emoluments from the total revenues, ₦44.01 million (\$338,538.50), which accounted for 82.2% remained for development at the grassroots. The comparable figure of such money for other local governments outside Ife region was 63.0%. However, indications from these communities confirmed that there was nothing on the ground to show for this huge sum of money in the rural areas of south-western Nigeria.

Circumstances surrounding the spending attitudes of government at all levels in the country (Nigeria) and the recent windfall in the global oil market

indicated that the country was rich enough to take care of her domestic needs without recourse to external borrowing. It is, however, unfortunate that what is important to Nigerian leaders (both in political and administrative offices) at all levels of government is how to “share” the money, instead of investing such oil windfall on basic services that could produce conducive environments for the citizenry, especially the rural dwellers.

In essence, the majority of facilities in rural area are produced and sustained by the local people. The relevant question at this juncture is: What happens to the grants and aid from the federal government and the local fees and rates collected? The poor performance of local government in Nigeria, especially with respect to rural development, can be blamed on official corruption. The Local Governments, which ought to be community oriented are, rather, externally oriented, and rely heavily on federal grants. This arrangement favours misappropriation of public funds and resources simply because the leaders are not accountable to the local people (Akinola, 2003, 2004). This confirms that the rural people in southwestern Nigeria did not rely on governments, rather they engaged in trusted institutional arrangement.

Further, findings of a study conducted in 2005 show that the people in Ife region, especially the farmers, have extended their collective efforts to enhance their economic empowerment. In Wanikin village, a group of farmers, numbering 140 people, pooled resources and purchased a tractor at the cost of ₦1.5 million (\$11,530.00) in November, 2003 for farming activities. This, invariably, has enhanced the farmers’ work as they used the tractor in rotation on their farms. Similarly, the farmers in Famia village formed Ifesowopo Co-operative and Thrift Society in March, 2001 from which they borrowed money to finance their farming and domestic activities. The number of farmers in the association is 75. The amount of loan given out varies (between ₦150,000 and ₦600,000) depending on the financial ability of members.

Discussions so far confirmed that the rural people in southwestern Nigeria cooperated among themselves on the conditions that they established rules and enforced compliance. This co-operation was possible when the participants at both community and associational levels perceived that the benefits of co-operation were beneficial to all. It is important to note at this juncture that where government had faltered, the people engage in problem-solving through mutual agreements, relying on the principles of equity, fairness and mutual behavioural expectations.

From the above analyses, it is obvious that mass mobilization strategies provide answers to most local development questions that the state has been failing to address over the years. Rather than to wait for the local government authorities that are closest to them, the communities in southwestern Nigeria revived their old traditions and, through self-organizing and self-governing capabilities, have planned and executed several public goods and services that directly touch the lives of their people. All these culturally homogenous groups see the need to come together and address their universal problems. It is only at this level of common-pool resources that some facilities have been provided by

the people in order to cope with the conditions of life they were subjected to by the government. This is the doctrine of polycentric governance, which provides alternative strategies to address problems of daily existence at the grassroots level in the face of dismal performance of the state structure of governance.

The lesson we can learn from these institutions is how the people were able to mobilize and use the resources judiciously, whereas the local governments that have access to greater resources left no significant impact on the lives of the people at the grassroots level. Though it cannot be categorically stated that these institutions have performed excellently, it is on record that they have been able to mobilize resources and accomplish some modicum level of success. It needs to be stated, however, that though local people possess tremendous capabilities, their technical know-how and abilities are not adequate to enable them overcome some difficulties. This is likely to have accounted for their shortcomings that have been identified with some projects, especially on road construction that was beyond the ability of the rural people. Government officials that were trained and equipped to perform these tasks were not always available to assist local communities as they (government officials) are mostly found in urban areas. The concern is that if these institutions are so accountable to their members, we should begin to conceptualize how they can be used to re-constitute order from the bottom up and to serve as alternatives to the state structure of governance.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper discovered that the inability of the governments (federal, state and local) to provide and maintain rural infrastructure led the people to revive their old traditions that embrace collective action to achieve a reasonable level of success. It was also discovered that community efforts in the provision and maintenance of rural infrastructural facilities amount to ₦26,204,000.00 (\$1,546,071.7) in southwestern Nigeria, which represented 98.3% of the total figure (₦26,254,000.00) (\$1,566,523.7), thus constituting the prime mover for rural facilities development. The Local Governments in the region that have access to revenues from the higher level of governments spent ₦450,000.00 (\$20,452) (i.e. 1.7%). This is, however, seen as deprivation and poverty on the part of rural dwellers in the region.

We cannot address the problem of infrastructural deprivation without addressing the causative factors, which can be described as a disconnection between the rural institutions and the state structure of governance. One way to begin is to design a two-tier system of local government where the community development association will be the second tier. Without interfering in the affairs of these institutions, direct allocation should be made to the associations that have evidence of community development. There is, however, the need to monitor the activities and operations of these institutions by an independent

body, which would comprise eminent personalities with integrity, who have vision and passion for the rural dwellers and are ready to serve.

However, it needs be pointed out that, no matter how viable community associations may be, some projects are beyond the financial and technical reach of the local people. For instance, the cutting and embankment in road construction require sophisticated equipment that could be acquired by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development at both the federal and state levels for use at the local level. In addition, there is the need to establish labour-based rural roads development – a programme that is being propagated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The basic principle of labour-based rural roads development is that the government and the people operate together where the activities of one complement that of the other. The government supplies simple implements, tools, and plants as well as technical assistance to the rural communities. The rural people form potential resources in terms of manpower and the rich knowledge of their environment much more than is often appreciated, and they possess greater organisational skills than are recognised.

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