



Comparing Operational Dynamics of Community-based Organisations in Geographically Contrasting Areas of Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Community-Driven Development (CDD) is a development approach which gives control of development decisions and resources to community groups. Community-based Organisations (CBOs) are the driving force of this development approach. This paper compares the mode of operation of CBOs in two geographically contrasting areas of Ondo State, Nigeria. Akure South Local Government Area (LGA), an urban hinterland, was compared with Ilaje LGA, a rural coastland. Stratified sampling was employed to gather data from 46 CBOs in the study areas with the aid of a questionnaire which was administered to elicit information from executive members of the CBOs. Data processing involved uni-variate analysis resulting in tables and charts to arrive at various conclusions. Findings revealed among others that there was a high level of dependence by CBOs in the rural coastland on the government for external funding while in contrast there was greater diversification in fund sourcing in the urban hinterland. Recommendations include evolving strategies such as operation of multipurpose cooperative stores by CBOs in the rural coastland to improve financial base in order to meet the needs of members and facility needs of host communities.

Keywords: CBOs, Community-Driven Development, CBOs' operation, rural development, self-help.

1. Introduction

Poverty has been extensively researched by various authors and organisations. Njeru (2004) looked at poverty as defined in absolute, relative and subjective terms. He hinged absolute poverty on lack of basic necessities of life while relative poverty was perceived to involve the use of relative standards in both time and place in the assessment of poverty; though what is accepted as

basic needs of life in a society are luxuries in some other societies. Subjective poverty has to do with whether or not individuals or groups actually feel poor. In modern times, governments have come to terms with the need to partner with grassroots organisations (and the civil society in general) in the process of addressing the scourge of poverty.

Local NGOs and Community-based Organisations (CBOs) constitute an important group within civil society. Civil society consists of a collection of intermediary associations or organisations which operate in social and political spaces between primary units and the state (Yankson, 2000). CBOs form 'one' of the main actors of the Local Economic Development (LED) process. Since they exist mainly in form of Community Development Associations, Co-operative Societies and occupational/trade unions, they have been responsible for the provision of communal facilities such as schools, markets, water points, clinics or health centres and town or community halls. They are major contributors to economic improvement through various initiatives such as credit loan facilities, joint collaterals and bulk purchasing.

CBOs operate within the framework of the Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach, a variant of which is also the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach. CDD gives control of development decisions and resources to community groups; a situation where poor communities receive funds, decide on their use, plan and execute the chosen local projects, and monitor the provision of services that result. This improves the people's income and empowerment, the lack of which is a form of poverty (International Development Association, 2009). Similarly, the PRA is an approach used by NGOs and other agencies involved in international development which aim to incorporate the knowledge and opinions of rural people in the planning and management of development projects and programmes (Wikipedia, 2010).

This paper compares the mode of operation of CBOs in two geographically contrasting areas of Ondo State, Nigeria considering the pattern of operation in rural coastland and urban hinterland which mark their distinction. To achieve this goal, objectives were set to identify the various types of existing CBOs, elicit information on their goals, find the source(s) of funding and leadership selection

process, and equally obtain information on involvement in infrastructure provision among others.

2. Literature Review

The problems of the urban centres cannot be solved unless those of the rural areas are solved, or at least contained. These problems emanated from the unprecedented rural-urban migration which in turn derives from rural stagnation or underdevelopment, poverty and unemployment (Akpomuvie, 2010). It is deductive to say that rural poverty, when not addressed, fuels urban poverty by worsening already bad situations in urban employment, management, service delivery and livability. Hence, the strong need to continue exploring avenues for partnership towards regional development through the community-driven development approach.

Community-Driven Development (CDD) is an approach that gives control of development decisions and resources to community groups. As earlier stated, the approach allows poor communities to receive funds, decide on their use, plan and execute the chosen local projects, and monitor the provision of services that result. Consequently, people's incomes and empowerment are improved. The Economic and Social Commission for West Africa (2004) added that CDD is one of the existing mechanisms for channelling development assistance throughout the developing world though as a process, it can be applied to different socio-economic contexts, often as a tool to revitalize democratic governance and participation.

Furthermore, since most often, elected representatives do not always take care of the interest of the poor (Olutokun, 2008), there is need for the poor to take their fate in their hands by participating in developmental projects that will improve their plight. Okafor (2005) in Olutokun (2008) had observed that when communities participate in their own projects, benefits include improved efficiency, better projects and outcome, greater transparency and accountability (which enhances service delivery), initiation of local private contractors and service providers and the encouragement of donors harmonization. He further pointed out that communities which are beneficiaries of CD projects should not be seen as targets of poverty reduction efforts but as *assets* and *partners* in the

development process. However, not all may agree with this since the aim of the partnership is to achieve improved economy at individual and community scale. In fact Abatena (1995) had earlier posited that local self-help programmes (activities) have a significant role to play in promoting local and regional development, and in improving the living conditions of the people.

Abatena further stated that the local community may also acquire practical leadership and organisational skills from the process of self-help. His case studies in Ethiopia which focused on two communities; one a rural community (Tula) and the other an urban centre (Gurage) buttress this fact and expose several benefits of self-help and CDA activities. CBOs exist in various forms. Such include CDAs, Cooperative Societies, Youth Organisations, and Residents' Association to mention a few.

The principles of Self-help and CDD are equally involved in Local Economic Development (LED) concept. The WorldBank (2001) explains that LED offers local government, the private sector, the not-for-profit sectors and the local community the opportunity to synergise in order to improve the local economy. LED focuses on enhancing competitiveness, and thus increasing sustainable growth; and also on ensuring that the growth is inclusive. Talking on the review of the first UN decade for the eradication of poverty, the Secretary-General stated that "One important lesson is the need for a participatory process that is country-driven and that promotes ownership as a necessary precondition for the successful implementation of policies and programmes" (United Nations, 2006).

Ukpong (1993) enlightened that the subtlety underpinning the informal operations of NGOs has often worked against them in a manner they least understood; that inhibiting problems encountered could be rightly be traced back to the dynamics of their operation. His research picked on three foreign/international and local NGOs in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States which are Lions Club International, Neighbourhood Development Organisation (of Back Electoral Ward in Cross River State) and Ikono Development Association (of Ikono Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State). Flaws identified in their operations included rationalised ostracism, competitive fragmentation, constituency recognition and learned helplessness. In his words,

these are indications of latent dysfunctions of NGOs which are scarcely admitted and discussed publicly.

Many NGOs are yet to come to terms with this development, the reluctance being predicated on the hope that the liberating roles assigned to NGOs will ultimately overwhelm whatever distractions that occurred. While celebrating the NGOs, it is more pertinent to admit the existence of such problems that have occurred and act on them in order to maximise the benefit of this grassroots strategy. Hence, the need for further studies on the operational dynamics of NGOs or CBOs as the case may be.

3. The Study Area: Akure South and Ilaje LGAs

Akure South LGA is located in Ondo State in the South-western geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It was created out of Akure LGA on 1st October, 1996. It occupies 2,303 square kilometres and lies within $6^{\circ}9' - 7^{\circ}25'N$ and $5^{\circ}05' - 5^{\circ}40'E$. The headquarters of the LGA is Akure city which doubles as the capital city of the State. The LGA accommodates less than 400,000 persons (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2007) who are mainly Yorubas; the dominant tribe in south-western Nigeria. Major settlements in the LGA are Akure and Oda while minor settlements include Aponmu, Ipinsa, Iwoye, and Igbatoro. The LGA is divided into 11 political wards and has cash crops such as kolanut, cocoa, oil palm, and rocks which are useful for various construction works.

Ilaje LGA, which is equally located in Ondo State, covers 2,300 square kilometres. It lies within $4^{\circ}28' - 7^{\circ}40'N$ and $5^{\circ}41' - 7^{\circ}23'E$ while the headquarters is at Igbokoda town. Igbokoda has offices of the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Ondo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC), the State Civil Service and series of commercial banks. The LGA accommodates 350,000 inhabitants going by projections from the 2006 National Population Census figures. The major tribe is Ilaje while the dominant occupation is fishing. Existing natural resources include petroleum, bitumen, and water resources. There are two dominant kingdoms namely Mahin and Ugbo with minor kingdoms as Aheri and Etikan. Major settlements include Igbokoda, Ode-Ugbo, Ugbonla, Ayetoro, Ode-Mahin and Ode-Etikan. There are 12 political wards in Ilaje LGA.

4. Methodology

Two LGAs were selected for this study based on major geographical, economic and cultural distinctions. Akure South LGA is a landlocked urban setting (for the greater part) with the highest income earners in the state. The population has divergent cultural background though dominated by the Yoruba tribe. The LGA was divided into strata, with each stratum equivalent to a geopolitical ward in the LGA. This summed up to 11 strata (since there are 11 wards in the study area) out which 10% of the districts/settlements in each ward were randomly selected as sample for investigation. The nine wards within the city of Akure consist of districts or streets while the 2 wards outside the city had distinct settlements from which selection was made.

Ilaje LGA is a coastal rural area with relatively lower income earners in two dominant kingdoms namely Ugbo and Mahin kingdoms. Equally, 10% of settlements in each of the 12 geopolitical wards in the LGA were randomly selected to represent the sample size of the settlements investigated. Both open and close ended questions were employed to elicit data from CBOs in the respective districts or settlements.

The research relied mainly on the CBOs which were identified in the sampled settlements since there was no detailed record of registered CBOs and there was much bias in the list of such CBOs obtained from the Local Government Secretariats. Consequently, a total of 46 questionnaire copies were pre-determined and administered to the two LGAs with two CBOs investigated in each of the 23 wards (11 wards in Akure South and 12 wards in Ilaje LGA). The survey was conducted by trained field assistants on a weekend to allow for easy and maximum access to respondents. The executive members of the CBOs were targeted for the questionnaire administration. Data processing involved uni-variate analysis resulting in the generation of tables and charts to arrive at various conclusions on the operations of CBOs in the study areas.

5. Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the comparison of the operations of CBOs in the two selected LGAs in the state.

5.1 Registration of CBOs in the Study Areas

The registration status of CBOs in the Study Area reveals that 89.5% of the CBOs in Akure South registered with the government while only 63.6% of the CBOs in Ilaje were registered. The high level of educational and developmental awareness in the urban-based LGA could have been responsible for this disparity. Nonetheless, some of the unregistered CBOs in Ilaje had applied for registration as indicated on Table 1. Since registration with government provides opportunities for CBOs to benefit from government support and equally facilitate their recognition by International Organisation, it becomes expedient for the CBOs to register with the government.

Table 1: Registration Status

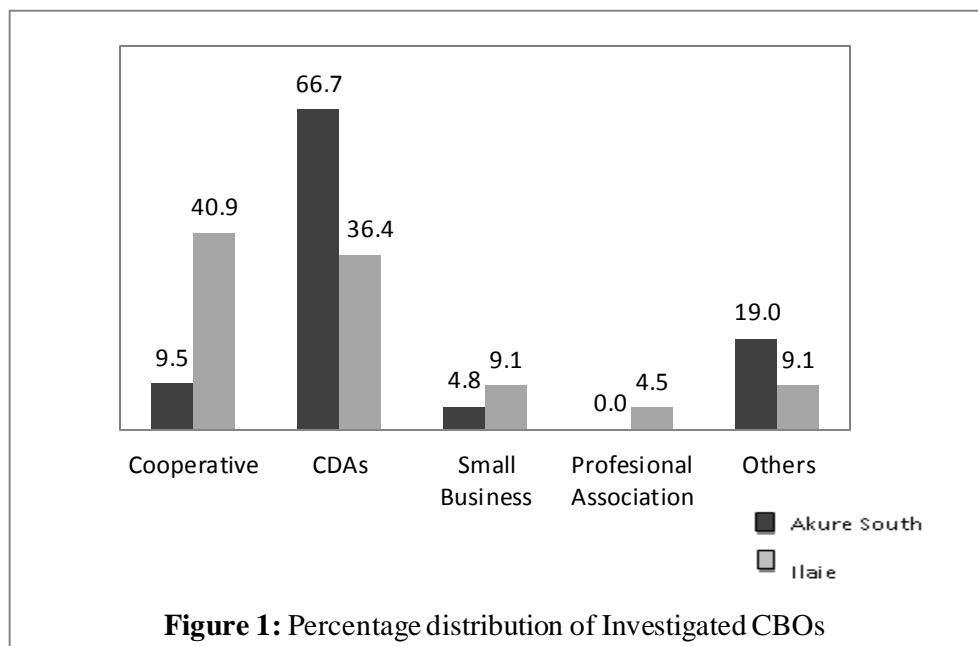
s/n	Registration with Government	Akure South		Ilaje		Grand Total	
		Freq.	% of Total	Freq.	% of Total	Freq.	% of Total
1.	Registered	17	89.5	14	63.6	31	75.6
2.	Not Registered	2	10.5	5	22.7	7	17.1
3.	Registration in Progress	0	0.0	3	13.6	3	7.3
Total		19	100.0	22	100.0	41	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, January 2008.

5.2 Nomenclature of CBOs

CBOs in the study areas are made up of cooperative societies, CDAs, and technical professional associations among others. Figure 1 reveals what obtains in the 2 LGAs. In Akure South, there were less cooperative societies than in Ilaje. However, there were far more CDAs in Akure South (66.7%) than in Ilaje (36.4%) while none of the investigated CBOs in Akure South was a Professional Association but 4.5% were in this group in Ilaje. This shows a rise and fall situation in the distribution of the CBOs between these 2 LGAs. Most residents or landlords associations are classified as CDAs and most residents of communities belong to these associations. Though several persons may belong to cooperative societies in Akure South, this in most cases happens in their workplaces and not in their immediate residential communities. This is another reason why there is much gap between CDAs and cooperative societies in the Akure South. Furthermore, small business associations are mainly found in

densely populated central and market areas. Many of those who have retail shops in residential areas are not compelled to belong to such small business associations compared with those who trade in the market areas where such unions or associations are so strong. This is why very few (less than 10%) belonged to small-scale business associations in both LGAs.



Source: Auhtor's Fieldwork, January, 2008.

5.3 Goal of CBOs

CBOs which were created for the purpose of income generation in Akure South were more in number than those for same purpose in Ilaje; but as expected, the percentages were low since CBOs are expected to provide assistance to individuals and communities instead of generating income. Those CBOs created for the purpose of providing social services in Akure South (66.7%) were far higher in percentage than those in Ilaje (22.7%). This record seems to agree with the earlier data on CDAs which revealed their dominance in Akure South (since they provide social services in most cases). Only 4.8% of the investigated CBOs in Akure South provided credit loan facilities alone compared with 27.3% in Ilaje. There were others that provided loans in conjunction with other services such as social services. The loans were made available by cooperative societies, small business associations and even technical professional associations. Furthermore, in Ilaje, the needs of the people are multifarious. This is responsible for the

higher percentage (27.3%) of community organisations that were involved in several other services than in Akure South (than in Ilaje). Traces of this was equally revealed in the fact that 9.1% of Ilaje CBOs were involved in all of providing loans, social services and income generating activities (see Table 2).

Table 2: Goal of CBOs

s/n	Purpose	Akure South		Ilaje		Grand Total	
		Freq.	% of Total	Freq.	% of Total	Freq.	% of Total
1.	Income generation alone	3	14.3	2	9.1	5	11.6
2.	Social services alone	14	66.7	5	22.7	19	44.2
3.	Provision of credit loan	1	4.8	6	27.3	7	16.3
4.	Income generation & provision of credit loan	0	0.0	1	4.5	1	2.3
5.	Income generation & social services	1	4.8	0	0.0	1	2.3
6.	Income generation, social services & provision of credit loan	0	0.0	2	9.1	2	4.7
7.	Others	2	9.5	6	27.3	8	18.6
Total		21	100.0	22	100.0	43	100.0

Source: Author's Field work, January 2008.

5.4 Membership Composition

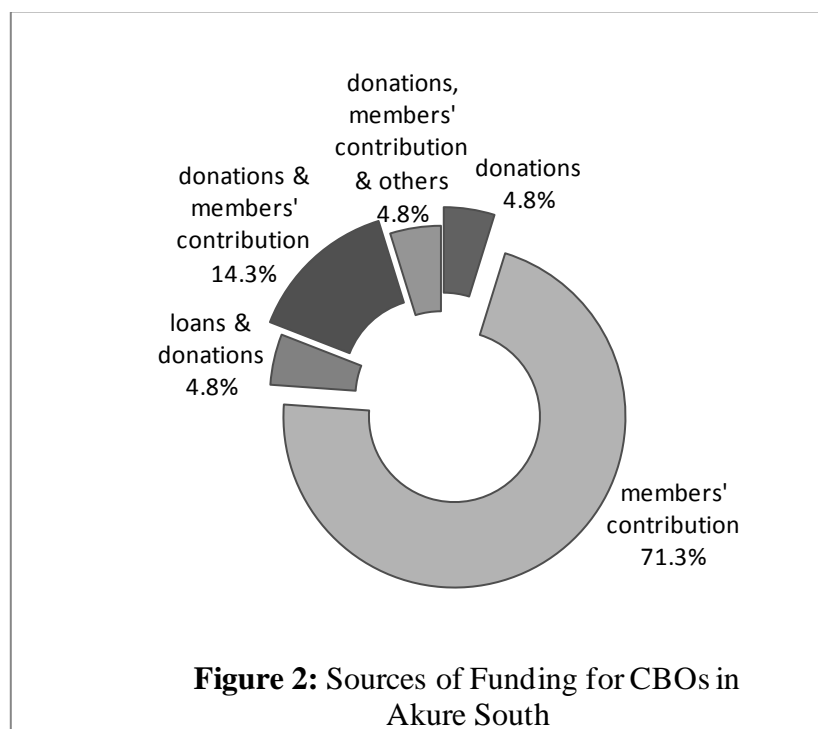
The composition of membership of CBOs shows a virtually all-comers situation. In both LGAs about half of the CBOs indicated that “anyone” could join them. This means that limitations are reduced for most CBOs when it comes to entry by new members. Most times, the major criterion hinges on being resident in the community and having a means of livelihood. This agrees with the findings pointed out in an earlier section where CDAs are dominant among the CBOs.

More than half (57%) of the respondents confirmed that CBOs in Ilaje had membership open to “anyone” while a little below half (45%) are in the same category in Akure South. This shows that it was easier to join CBOs in Ilaje than in Akure South. This could have been as a result of the dire need for economic assistance in Ilaje resulting from the poorer economic status. In order to give

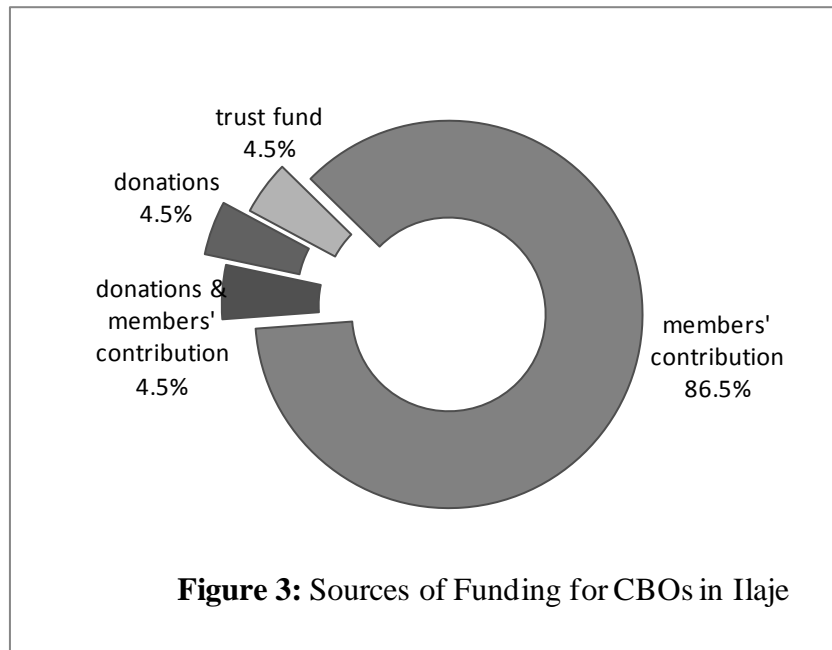
opportunities to members of the community to join in efforts towards improving their personal life and the welfare of the community, it was needful to allow for ease of association with the local associations. The CBOs in Akure South were likely stricter in allowing new members in the midst of several interest groups and divergent professional affiliations and a more complex society.

5.5 Source(s) of Funding

Figures 2 and 3 reveal that members' contributions form the financial base for most of the CBOs in the two LGAs. When the 2 LGAs were compared, it was observed that members' contribution was responsible for the financial strength of 71.3% of the CBOs in Akure South compared with 86.5% in Ilaje. This implies that a greater percentage of the CBOs in Ilaje relied on members' contribution than those that relied on same source of funding in Akure South. The remaining CBOs relied mainly on donations which could be easily attracted from other sources. These CBOs have more enlightened members who could get in touch with philanthropists in the society, government or the business world to donate for the execution of projects. In the case of those in Ilaje, the 9.0% of the remaining sources are made up of donations and trust funds.



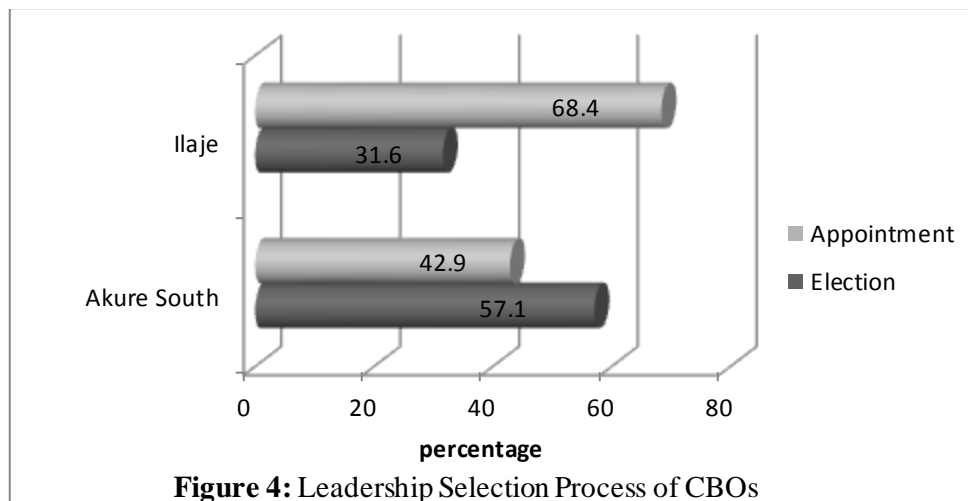
Source: Author's Fieldwork, January 2008



Source: Author's Fieldwork, January 2008

5.6 Leadership Selection Process

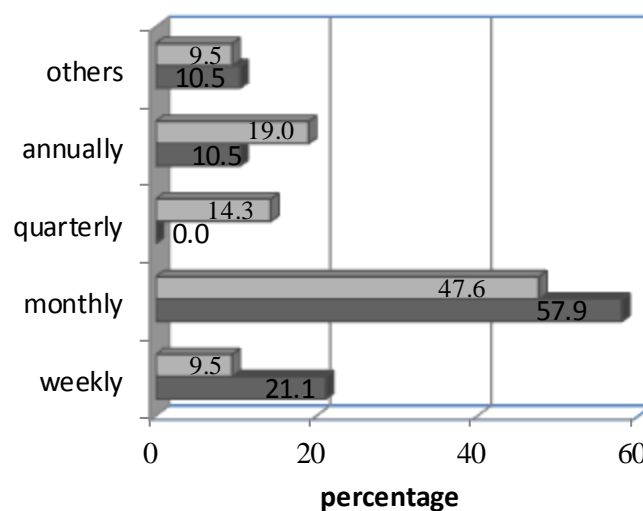
The performance of CBOs is not unconnected with the commitment of their leaders. This study reveals that in Ilaje, more than two-third of the CBOs appointed their Executive Council while in Akure South, less than half of the CBOs had appointed leadership (see Figure 4). This implies that democracy is better appreciated and clamoured for in the urban centres than in the rural areas. In Ilaje, the issue of trust could have aided the resulting scenario contrary to the strong desire to exercise fundamental rights by residents of Akure South which may not be unconnected with level of enlightenment. Thus the greater percentage of CBOs with elected leadership. Definitely the noticed trait in Ilaje cannot be completely excluded from the CBOs in Akure South since 42.9% is not a low figure. But the relatively lower percentage is not unconnected with the fact that cities drive political space and participation.



Source: Author's Fieldwork, January 2008.

5.7 Regularity of Members' Contribution

Members' contribution occurs at different time intervals. However, the comparison of the study areas shows that 57.9% of respondents in Akure South contributed monthly while 47.6% contributed monthly in Ilaje. The same trend was observed for weekly contribution. A higher percentage of 21.1% contributed weekly in Akure South than the 9.5% that contributed weekly in Ilaje. Generally, these time intervals are more comfortable for salary earners and traders than the longer periods involving quarterly and annual contributions. Such contributions in form of "esusu" or "ajo" come into play here. The CBOs with annual contributions (annual dues) from members are the few local professional associations in the communities.



Source: Author's Fieldwork, January 2010.

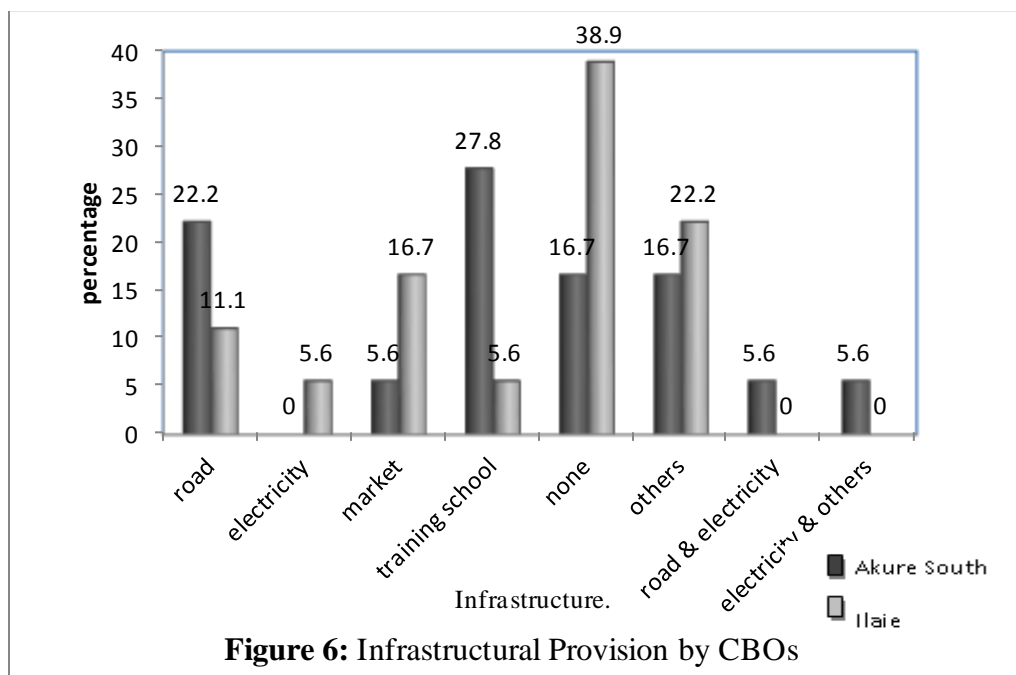
Source: Author's Fieldwork, January 2010.

5.8 Provision of Infrastructural Facilities by the CBOs

In Ilaje, there is the provision of electricity by very few CBOs (5.6%) that supply electricity to their communities (see Figure 6). For instance, in Ayetoro, a power generator supplies the town with electricity for definite number of hours during the day. This is one of the efforts of the CDA. In Akure South, none of the investigated CBOs provided such facility (see Figure 5). The percentage of CBOs in Ilaje (38.9%) which did not provide any facility in their communities is more than double those who did not provide in Akure South. This implies a dire need of facilities in Ilaje. The problem with Ilaje is the limitation stemming from poor funding. In the case of Akure South, many CBOs had come to accept that it was the responsibility of the government to perform such functions. Many governments will want to show that they are performing their roles by making sure that they truly provide infrastructure in urban areas especially to score political points in the face of visitors or persons in transit.

Market provision was a popular target by CBOs in Ilaje (16.7%) compared with Akure South (5.6%). In Ilaje, just like in many rural areas, most persons need organised markets to sell their produce. In Akure South, the impact of the central Oba's market is such that many are drawn to the city centre to buy especially on large scale. In some cases, residents of neighbouring settlements still patronise the central market. The influence of several retail shops in residential neighbourhoods owned by individuals cannot be ignored. The Isinkan market complements the Oba's market at the city centre.

The remarkable difference in the provision of training school does not come as a surprise for Akure South. There is a bigger prospect of getting trainees in the urban area and this will assist the CBOs in the area of revenue generation for other purposes. Such patronage cannot be enjoyed by CBOs in Ilaje. However, on roads, contributions in form street lighting, digging of drainage channels and grading of bad roads are highly valuable to residents of Ilaje. Comprehensive road construction efforts were out of the question here.



Source: Author's Fieldwork, January 2008.

5.9 Expected Sources of Assistance

Assistance was expected from different sources ranging from individuals to NGOs and government. There is virtually no difference in the percentage of those CBOs expecting help from the individuals. It is also glaring that few of the CBOs were putting their hope in getting assistance from individuals as 5.6% and 5.3% of them were expecting assistance in Akure South and Ilaje respectively. However, there was a remarkable difference in the percentage of those expecting help from government alone in Akure South (11.1%) and those in Ilaje (42.1%). The level of expectation from government alone in Ilaje indirectly tells of the high level dependency on government intervention. In recent times, there have been efforts to make settlements in this area accessible by road. The high expectation could not have been unconnected to the lack of government's presence until this moment. CBOs in Akure South would prefer to look to other sources for help (with 66.7% response). This indicates an approach of "spreading their tentacles" in order to obtain assistance from different sources.

NGOs are still expected to perform better in contributing to improving the quality of life in the rural coastal area as could be observed from the data. For NGOs, only international NGOs with a huge capital base can be of help in the manner that CBOs need help. Furthermore, different NGOs have different goals

to achieve and so the CBOs that do not fall in line with their objectives cannot obtain assistance from them. In modern times, NGOs have been interested in the case of the girl child and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The ones that deal with poverty issues have so much responsibility to handle in assisting several organisations. These are some of the reasons why NGOs are not readily available to CBOs in some areas like it has been observed in this case (see Table 3).

Table 3: Level of Expectation from Different Sources

s/n	Sources of Assistance	Akure South		Ilaje		Grand Total	
		Freq.	% of Total	Freq.	% of Total	Freq	% of Total
1.	Individuals	1	5.6	1	5.3	2	5.4
2.	Government	2	11.1	8	42.1	10	27.0
3.	NGOs	2	11.1	4	21.1	6	16.2
4.	Individuals & Government	5	27.8	1	5.3	6	16.2
5.	Government & NGOs	1	5.6	1	5.3	2	5.4
6.	Individuals, Government & NGOs	4	22.2	1	5.3	5	13.5
7.	Individuals, Government & others	1	5.6	1	5.3	2	5.4
8.	Others	2	11.1	2	10.5	4	10.8
Total		18	100.0	19	100.0	37	100.0

Source: Author's Field work, January 2008.

5.10 Feedback Mechanism

In order to know the performance level of the various forms of assistance, the CBOs obtain feedback in various manners. The case of the two LGAs, when compared, is illustrated on Table 4. In Ilaje, 59.1% get feedback through periodic monitoring of the assistance rendered to the people or the community while only 35.0% of the CBOs in Akure South do the same thing. A greater percentage depends on benefactors' response in Akure South (45.0%) than the 18.2% in Ilaje. The percentage of those that were casual in getting response on the assistance provided to the people and the community is equally higher in Akure South (20.0%) than those in Ilaje (4.5%). All these give an indication that there was a passive attitude towards monitoring the performance of the efforts by the CBOs especially in Akure South. When as many as 20.0% of CBOs in Akure South only relied on comments from casual observation stemming from some personal visits to a friend's business centre, then there is a problem. The only reason that could

be easily attached to this is from the side of the benefactors some of whom may not want interference from the CBOs. These benefactors could develop the attitude that once he can pay back his loan or pay up the money on the equipment or machine bought for him by the CBO, then, no one has the right to interfere with his business.

Some CBOs combined periodic monitoring with the response from benefactors to know the extent to which their forms of assistance had gone in helping to improve the lot of the people. The same percentage of CBOs (9.1%) involved some other means to obtain feedback from assisted persons. Nonetheless, the combination of efforts to obtain feedback is limited to only Ilaje as there was no indication of sort in Akure South.

Table 4: Feedback Method by CBOs

Feedback Region	Periodic Monitoring	Benefactors' response	Casual observation	Periodic monitoring and benefactors' response	others
Akure South	35.0	45.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Ilaje	59.1	18.2	4.5	9.1	9.1

Source: Author's fieldwork, January 2008

6. Recommendations and Conclusion

While it is commendable to find more than a quarter of the investigated CBOs involved in training in the urban area (as this helps to empower several jobless graduates in the city), there is need to equally emphasize the excessive reliability of CBOs in the rural coastland on government alone as it affects external support. There is need for a shift in focus since the disposition of government to this area has been that of neglect. This factor has limited the ability of CBOs in the area to provide necessary infrastructure to support their settlements. Hence, there is the need to diversify fund sourcing. As obtained in certain local NGOs (Abatena, 1995; Burns, 2010), the rural areas can engage in the running multipurpose cooperative stores; trading in household items to raise funds for some their projects. Seed money could be raised for such stores through contributions of members of the community especially in the case of CDAs. This

is made easy by the high level members' contribution observed in this area. This has yielded great benefits in some instances where it was practised. Also, the poor focus on a combination of social services provision and income generation coupled with the high concentration on just provision of credit loans or social services as indicated by the highest percentage of CBOs in Ilaje study reveals the strong need for the above recommendation.

Furthermore, this rural coastal area needs to demonstrate a greater level of democracy not just in the selection of its leadership but also to facilitate accountability. Such approach helps the process for dealing with non-performance and mismanagement of hard-earned fund through cooperative efforts and members' contribution. It is hoped that diversifying income generation through alternative means and greater democratization of the operations of the CBOs will go a long way in helping to move them forward.

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