



**Rural Governance: Challenges and Possibilities for Rural Development in
Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.**

by

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Abstract

The paper sought to investigate governance at the rural community's level with the view to finding out challenges and possibilities for development. To achieve this, 3 objectives and 3 research questions were investigated. Primary data was generated from the field through the use of structured and unstructured interview questions, while secondary data was generated from books, journals, historical records and unpublished monograph. However, 150 respondents were selected using purposive sampling technique. This technique required each of the respondents to meet the criteria that made their information relevant to the subject matter. Description statistical techniques were employed in the summary and analysis of the data collected. The results showed that there were possibilities, such as availability of human and natural resources, the willingness of community members in the development process etc, while skilled man power, political will, were rated very low. In addition there were challenges that attempted to hinder development efforts. These included high level of illiteracy, corrupt practices, low internally generated revenue, top-bottom approach to development and others. The study recommends among others that human capital development, discouragement of top-bottom approach and improper utilization of available funds for development etc should be intensified.

Keywords: Rural Governance, Community Development, Possibilities and Challenges, Technological Application.

1. Introduction

Governance is the centre in which the exercise of political, economic and administrative authorities in the management of a community affairs is made possible (UNDP, 1977). It could also be seen as the management of the affairs of a State (Awofeso, 2006). This suggests that governance is an all-embracing term which encompasses institutional arrangement where the functions of government are extended to meet the needs of the governed. From the aforementioned, rural governance can be seen as the institutionalization of both traditional and modern democratic agencies for the purpose of realizing government functions that could meet people's needs in the rural communities. In line with this notion, Ekong (2003) observed that two types of institutions for the realization of governance are co-existing in rural communities, the traditional and modern democratic governing institutions.

Against this background, Ekong (2003) still argued that, "to realize the benefits of governance through the traditional institution, there are such traditional community heads as either Obi, Oba, Emir or Paramount ruler etc to pilot the affairs of their traditional domain". In order to give meaning to their activities, paramount chiefs are assisted by a number of other chiefs who are somehow specialists in various aspects of traditional social life. While the modern democratic governing institutions represented by the Local Government Council, being the third tier of the modern government has politicians (either by appointment or election), professionals, public administration practitioners, technocrat, and civil servants who may not be the indigenes of the local communities represent the second governing institutions.

The traditional leaders as identified earlier are usually-indigenes of the rural community concerned. The leadership positions are defined by past traditions of the people and loyalty is total for the community, such that any self-help effort initiated would attract general acceptability because of strong tie and integration into the community over the years. In contrast, the modern leaders whose position are defined by party loyalty, democratic ideas and ideals (politicians, professionals, contractors etc) may not necessarily be natives of the rural community. With their cosmopolitan, non-traditional, and governmental bureaucratic values, some of them represent external voluntary formal organizations. This is suggestive of the fact that their primary loyalty is first for the organization they represent, second, personal interest, before the community to which their services are rendered.

However, the trend shows traditional as subservient to the modern democratic leadership. This is because funds and most resources are controlled by the politicians and other interest groups in a reckless manner, which in turn distort the values of good governance (effectiveness, efficiency, prudent management of resources etc). In several instances, bad governance is promoted as characterized by deceit, corruption, injustice, neglect, insensitivity, non-accountability etc, leading to low productivity (Eminue, 2005). In the developed societies (US, Britain, Germany etc) grassroot governance is known for quality of life and high standard of living to stem the tide of rural urban migration (Uya and James, 2002). But in developing societies such as Nigeria, rural governance is promoter of poverty, penury, general hardship etc. Thus devalues and dehumanizes the settlers such that mass migration is highly pronounced. The reasons for this turn of event have always been corrupt practices and movement of locally oriented resources to other location in private capacity for private utilization (Ibok and Tom, 2010). For this reason, Ekong (2010) observed that the modern leaders who exemplify the strategic elites contrast with traditional leaders in thoughts and in deeds. We feel that empirical investigation into these contradictions could reveal the nature of rural governing institutions, possibilities, and challenges for rural community development in Akwa Ibom State.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this paper were as follows:

- To identify the interacting institutions, governing rural communities in Akwa Ibom State;
- To evaluate the potency of these institutions in governance, for the socio-infrastructure development of rural communities in Akwa Ibom State; and
- To identify the challenges facing these governing institutions in the development of rural communities in Akwa Ibom State.

1.3 Research questions

- What type of governing institutions exist in the rural communities of Akwa Ibom State?
- What are the possibilities and strength of these governing institutions in the development of rural communities in Akwa Ibom State?
- What are the challenges of these institutions that slow down the pace of development delivery in rural communities of Akwa Ibom State?

2. Literature Review

Akwa Ibom people and their sub-tribes in the then South-Eastern State of Nigeria had no tribal government (Nzimiro 1984, Ibok and Tom, 2010). For these authors the pre-colonial political structure has been described as acephalous, republican, fragmented and segmented. This is because unlike the Hausa/Fulani, the Yorubas, and the Benin Kingdom whose pre-colonial political structures were characterized by a centralized political structures, that of the people of Akwa Ibom State was non-centralized. Onwiojeogwu (1976) described the trend as “stateless society” which lacks a central system of political organization with a central king. Akinrinade (1985) and Ekong (2001, 2003, 2010) explained that authority and powers in the pre-colonial era in the South-East in general and Akwa Ibom in particular were shared among various individuals and groups such as the family, title holders, societies (Ekpe, Ekpo, Ekong etc), council of elders, age-grade, village and clan heads. This arrangement has clearly shown a segmented and fragmented political structure of the traditional institution in the study area.

However, the advent of colonial administration in Nigeria, had generated a new dimension of governance. This is because on arrival the British government found Nigeria not as a single country, but as distinct social units dictated by the customs and traditions of each area. This in the thoughts of the British needed a redefinition of the structure of governance. In this new dimension, Ugwu (2000) observed that the initiative of the colonialists led to a combination or initial fusion of both traditional and modern institutions (native authority) to form “indirect rule” (the use of traditional rulers in pretence to govern the page). The introduction of modern governmental agencies and policies into traditional structure with the illiterate traditional rulers as part of this new wave in governance had caused a resentment among the educated elites (Nzimiro, 1984).

Against this background, the introduction of modern governmental agencies, organizations (joint traditional and modern institutions), policies, and programmes had eroded the powers of the aged-long traditional and customary practices (Ugwu, 2000). In addition, the emerging educated political elites who asserted their superiority won the admiration of the colonialists who also desired a more informed work-force to run the colonial administration. Nzimiro (1984) had argued that the constitutional amendment and policy reforms did not acknowledge and encourage the roles of traditional institutions in community development. Thus, the traditional

institution had remained as moderator of customary practices suitable for lowly rated literate operators Ugwu (2000) observed that:

The traditional institution had its power eroded with” the attainment of independence in 1960. This was consequent upon the emerging educated political elites who asserted their superiority over lowly educated traditional rulers as international relations unfolded.

The introduction of the “indirect rule” was a subtle means of cutting cost of administration and not deliberate recognition of traditional institution of governance. According to Lord Burdon, quoted in Ugwu (2000) the main objectives of the indirect rule were:

To rule through the existing chiefs, to raise them in the administrative scale, to enlist them on our side in the work and progress of government, we cannot do without. To rule directly would require an army of British, magistrates, which both suggest the general unhealthiness of the country and the present poverty profile.

Indirect governance according to the above remarks, suggests more emphasis on the ruler than the ruled. Nwankwo (1990) argued that the success of the native administration in the Northern part facilitated the introduction of native authority ordinance No. 14 of 1916 in the Southwest and South East provinces (where Akwa Ibom State was domiciled). He went on to argue that this achievement was followed by the introduction of direct tax which spread and became acceptable throughout the country. The revenue generated from the direct tax assisted in the financing of social services such as agriculture, roads maintenance, water, primary and secondary education that enhanced colonial social well being. During this time, the Eastern Regional Local government Law 1952 introduced democratically elected three tier local government councils to replace the native authorities (made up of chiefs) with the primary function of service provisions. In practice (as it is today) a number of factors such as inadequate funds, higher government restrictions of the activities of some local authorities, inefficiency etc militated against effective performance of these local authorities. The summary of this low performance was captured by Ugwu (2000) that;

The institutions of local government established by the colonial rulers became so politicized that they could not operate as were originally conceived of them by the mid 1960s. The political intrigues and manoeuvring were so much that local elections were no longer held and local councils became avenues for compensation of party supporters and loyalists.

This remark suggests that rural governance is made up of both traditional and modern democratic institutions. The low performance has led to several reforms in the military era as well as in civil regimes. In the military regime of Yakubu Gowon, the reform led to:

- i. Increased scope of local participation;
- ii. Creation of new administrative units and structures to facilitate more participation and effective mobilization and management of resources for development purposes.

In the South Eastern region where Akwa Ibom State was a front line state, a new pattern of local government administration system was established known as the “development administration system.” The major philosophy of the system were: Community self-help; community organization; resource mobilization and introduction of modern resource management technique. Beyond this, the following structures were introduced;

- i. A two-tier structure of divisional and community councils;
- ii. Administrative units;
- iii. Coordinating units; and
- iv. Community council

The aim of these structures was to bring the government nearer to the people and reduce the barrier between the people and their environment (Nzimiro, 1984). Consequently, both the traditional and modern democratic institutions were interacting for the purpose of governing the rural people.

The possibilities that are embedded in rural governance for community development can be attributed to the 1976 Local Government Reform in Nigeria. In this reform, Nzimiro (1984) observed that appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives were entrenched. For the author,

“appropriate services” refers to the whole array of social services with which local governments all over the world have been traditionally associated with. For this reason, there are several possibilities including attention from different sources such as the federal, state governments, non-governmental organizations, natural and human resources that could facilitate rural community development (Ekong, 2010). The driving force of these possibilities as earlier mentioned is the combination of traditional and modern democratic institutions translated into good governance. Good governance is characterized by values of effectiveness, efficiency, justice and fair play, accountability, mass participation, consensus orientation, responsiveness and equity (Eminue, 2005). This suggests that whenever government at the grassroot level is short of the aforementioned values as in the case of most Third world countries (developing economies), the challenges of development seems to be insurmountable. In addition, the possibility of advancing the course of rural governance to meet human needs seems unachievable. Bellow-Imam (1985) noted that each of the local government units was expected to meet the following basic measures on the basis of 1976 reforms:

- i. The primary local government unit must embark on definite functions to address development challenges;
- ii. The primary unit must developed assured finances to enable it to plan it budget and carryout these functions;
- iii. It must be adequately staffed with people of the right caliber;
- iv. The conditions of service must be such as to attract the appropriate caliber of staff.

Ekong (1978) added the underlisted aims from the 1976 reforms and beyond;

- i. To make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives by devolving or delegating them to local representative or agencies;
- ii. To encourage the development of leadership potentials and initiative;
- iii. To mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public in local government; and
- iv. To provide a two-way channel of communication between local communities and governments at the state and the federal.

The developed economies (US, Canada, Germany, etc) are known to have taken similar steps as argued by scholars (Bellow-Imam, 1985, and Ekong, 1988) to provide extensive services, projects and programmes for the grassroot in their development efforts. These services are in the areas of air pollution control, public welfare, highway maintenance, recreation, adult education, hospital and public health, police, fire protection, water supply among others. Bellow-Imam (1985) evaluated the services or possibilities in the developed and developing worlds (at the implementation level), Nigeria fell below expectation (in terms of water supply, electricity, road network, education and general infrastructure).

In Nigeria still, there are two categories of specific functions assigned to local government, namely, “obligatory” and “optional” functions as contained in the 1976 Local Government Reform till date (Minna, 1993). For the author, obligatory functions include – markets and motor parks; sanitary inspection, refuse and night soil disposal; control of vermin; slaughter houses, slaughter slabs, public conveniences; Burial grounds, Registration of births, deaths and marriages; provision of community and local recreation centres - parks, gardens and public open spaces; grazing grounds; licensing supervision and regulation of bake houses, and laundries; licensing, regulation and control of the sale of liquor; collection of property and other rates, community tax and other designated revenue sources; naming of roads and streets and numbering of plots and buildings; control or leasing of animals etc. While optional functions of rural governance in the same reforms were: Health centres, maternity centres, dispensaries and health clinics, ambulance services, preventive health services; abattoirs, meat inspection; nursery, primary and adult education; information and public enlightenment; provision of public libraries and reading rooms; animal health extension and veterinary clinics; fire services; control of beggars, prostitution; repatriation of destitutes, the infirm and orphans; provision of public utility etc. All of these services and programmes in most local government, existed on paper, but fell short of expectation at the delivery stages (Ndukwe, 2005, Ekong, 2010).

It can be seen in the provisions of these services that the “banking concept” where the local government was the great provider such that, community members have loss sense of participation, self-reliance, and self help to the government seeming effort to give all things. This trend had led to the limitedness of the traditional institutions. Whereas, Ottong (2009) identified some principles that facilitate community effort in development, avoiding these principles suggest

avoiding the people. These are principles of cooperation, felt need, agreed upon goal, involvement, mass participation, local initiative, non-coercion and voluntarism, self-help and cultural conformity. For Ottong (2009), the hallmark of community development is the involvement of the people through their participation in the process of improving the community by the execution of specific projects to meet basic needs.

Table 1: Basic Needs Minimum Benchmark for the Local Government in Nigeria

S/N	Areas of Basic Needs	Community Development Projects
1	Shelter	Community hall, classrooms block
2	Food	Community farm-crops, poultry, animal rearing, processing nulls, food shops, market
3	Water	Borehole, pipe borne water, well stream, maintenance
4	Health	Community health centre, drug stores, dispensary, environmental sanitation, health, enlightenment
5	Education	Any care centre, schools, scholarship, bursary scheme, school fence, teachers quarters.
6	Social/Recreation	Civic Center, viewing center, playground, parks, garden, social homes, community square.

Source: Adapted from Ottong (2009) Community Development: Principles and Practice.

From Table 1, community, just like the individual, has basic needs. Thus, community development programmes and effort revolves round the satisfaction of these needs through the instrumentality of governance. The self-help approach, governing institutions efforts, external influence, the peoples readiness for change, mobilization of community’s resources (human & material) to meet the needs enumerated above are the possibilities therein in rural governance.

Essentially, the rural governing institutions before and after the 1976 reforms were plagued with so many challenges contrary to expectations. These rural governing institutions were conceived in order to ensure that every stratum of the Nigerian society benefited from governance. Nzimiro (1984) argued that, these lofty

ideals have turned out to be largely in favour of urban settlement. This arose from the guidelines that had a thin reference to the rural development challenges. The myriad of functions either allocated exclusively to local communities or to be jointly administered with the state governments, only six (6) were related to rural areas (Revenue collection from Forestry; Health centres and maternity homes, dispensary and health clinics etc).The distribution of both federal and state financial allocations to local governments on the basis of 75% on population and 25% for equalization worked against the rural areas. Yet, these areas often have a wider territory to cover with basic services such as roads, basic health and education. This suggests a higher over head costs. The limitation in the 1976 local administration reform was that, it could not address the challenge of unskilled, incapable staff, who worked in the rural areas, a situation that persisted till today. Awofeso (2006) added that:

In most rural local governments, political leadership was more often than not entrusted to absentee councilors (who normally lived in urban centers but sought nomination and elections in their rural birth places). The consequences are that in virtually everything urban local governments became richer than their rural counterparts, and remained parasitic on rural economy.

As noted from Awofeso's observation, local governments were excluded from agricultural programmes in their states, thus, the state and federal governments had different institutions for implementing their agricultural programmes independent of the local areas. The obvious implication for this action was that the basic employment sector in the rural areas was separated from them by the superior government. Such agricultural programmes were the Green revolution, Operation Feed the Nation, Agricultural Development Projects etc. Generally, rural areas were and are still without widespread development projects and so were plagued and are still plagued by absence of physical infrastructure. Thus, constitute a major reason for rural urban drift and lack of national integration. Higher rate of illiteracy, leading to high level of exploitation by urban capitalists and the use of rural areas as dumping ground i.e "dead woods" personnel who were not fit to go to the higher civil services, was a common experience (Ndukwe, 2015).

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted elite theory propounded by Vilfredo Pareto (cited in Ekong, 2003) an Italian social scientist. He maintained that the concentration of power in the hands of a few was an envitable fact of social life. For Vilfredo, society is made up of a few active individuals whose interests are different from that of the masses who

are passive in the environment they are supposed to transform. Thus, he presented society in two perspectives, a class that rules, and a class that is ruled. In his own class as different from that of Karl Mark, he referred to a group. This suggests that, various groups in the society presents elites who influence new ideas, values, technology and economic forces. In the rural areas, those who represent elite group, are absentee residents. Consequently, the superior abilities, organization, cohesion and skills are also absent. Even, traditional rulers who are part of the elite group are powerless because of lack of constitutional definition of their roles. In contrast those whose roles are constitutionally defined-councilors, chairmen of local government councils, technocrats, bureaucrats, youth leaders are absentee residents. These “absentee residents” often relocate their resources from the local communities to the urban centres where they built homes and established personal businesses. Thus, abandoned the local communities where a number of development possibilities are concentrated.

3. Study Area

The study area for this paper is Akwa Ibom State. The state was created from the then Cross River State in September 23rd 1987 by the President Babangida’s Administration. Though the state is homogenous, it comprises stocks of several people (Udoh, 2007). It has its political structure rested on the tripod which represent the three dominant ethnic groups comprising the Ibibio (the largest), Annang and Oron. Currently, the state is made up of several rural communities domiciled within the 31 Local Government Areas, and three senatorial districts (Figure 1) where both traditional and modern democratic institutions interact to produce local governance (Ekwere, 2008). The state has a weak industrial base, hence, some indigenes are engaged in civil service employment, while a greater number are into agricultural activities. Udoh (2007), argued that it is unfortunate to note that with the attendant influence and position of the state as an oil rich state, rural characteristics are still featuring prominently. For Udoh (2007), the people of Akwa Ibom State together with most areas of the Niger Delta Region are still crying for their own share of God’s given resources. Whereas, the availability of land for crops production, water resources for fishing, mangrove forest for forestry, solid minerals, oil and gas, the state should have experienced economic prosperity. This is because these resources have the potentials to enhance the economic status of the indigenes, promote good governance, and launch the state into international economic importance.

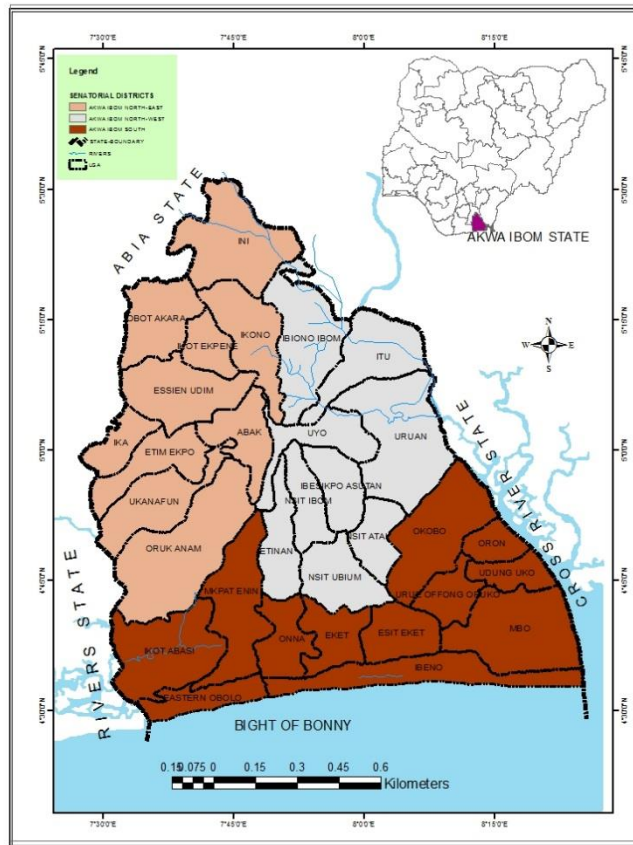


Figure 1: Map of the Study Area - 2016

4. Materials and Methods

The population of this study was 1500 people and consisted of traditional leaders, youth leaders, politicians (elected or appointed), technocrats, bureaucrats, security operatives. Using 10% criterion for sample selection (Osuala, 2005) a total of 150 sample participants was selected for the study. The procedures for sample selection started with the division of the study area into 3 clusters in line with the 3 senatorial districts (Uyo, Eket, Ikot Ekpene), where the 31 local government areas were domiciled as Figure 1 indicates. In each of the clusters, simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 5 local government areas, leading to a total of 15 local government areas. However “purposive sampling techniques” was adopted to select 150 sampled participants made up of traditional rulers who have

lived in the study area 50 years and above and politicians, technocrats or bureaucrats, and youth leaders in the 15 Local Government Areas. Consequently, a total of 150 study participants constituted the sample size. Primary data was generated from in-depth interviews on the 150 participants, while secondary data was generated from books, journals, archival materials, historical records, unpublished monograph etc. The descriptive statistical tool (simple percentage) was used to present the results.

5. Results

Table 2: Respondents identification of the nature of rural governing institutions (N-150)

S/NO	Variable	Variable Conceptualization	Frequency Occurrence		Total
			Yes	No	
1.	Nature of Rural Governing institutions	* Traditional Institution (Chiefs – Paramount Ruler, Clan and Village heads)	145 96.7%	5 3.5%	150 (100%)
		*Modern Democratic Institution - (Politicians, technocrats, Bureaucrats or Civil servant)	147 98%	3 2%	150 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

Table 2: shows the respondents description of the components of rural governance. From the total of 150 participants 96.7% and 98% respectively identified traditional and modern democratic institutions at separate interview sessions as the components of rural governance. The results show, rural governance is a combination of two institutions – traditional and modern democratic institutions (dual leadership structure).

Table 3: Respondents Perception of Possibilities in the rural governance for Community Development

S/N	Variable	Frequency of Occurrence		Total
		High	Low	
A	Availability of natural and human resources	145 (96.7%)	5 (3.3%)	150 (100%)
B	Availability of Skills man power	20 (13.3)	130(86.7)	150 (100%)
C	Community members willingness for development	140(93.3%)	10(6.7%)	150(100%)
D	Political will	10 (6.7%)	140 (93.3%)	150(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

Table 3: shows the participants’ perception of possibilities in rural governance for rural community development. At separate interview sessions, 96.7% perceived possibilities as natural and human resources availability, 93.3% believed in the willingness of community members while 86.7% and 93.3% agreed that skilled man power and “political will” respectively were very low. The results showed that, currently the natural and human resources are available, while skilled and “political will” are to be improved upon for meaningful community development result.

Table 4: Respondents’ Perception of Challenges in Rural governance in Akwa Ibom State

Variable	Operationalization of Variables	Responses		Total
High level of illiteracy	Low education and awareness	140 (93.3)	10 (6.7)	150 (100%)
Corrupt practices	Misuse of Public Funds	130 (86.7%)	20(13.3%)	150 (100%)
Top-Botom approaches	Influence of higher government on development issues.	140 (93.3%)	10 (6.7%)	150 (100%)
High level of unskilled personnel	Dumping ground for unproductive personnel	80 (53.3)	70(46.7%)	150 (100%)
Low internally generated revenue	Little or no source for internally generated Revenue (IGR).	145 (96.7%)	5(3.3%)	150 (100%)

(IGR)				
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Source: Field Survey 2015

Table 4: identified the following challenges: Low education and awareness creation, misuse of public funds, influence of higher government on community development, dumping ground of unproductive personnel, little or no source of internally generated revenue. However, 46.7% opposed the idea of local government being a dumping ground for unproductive personnel.

5.0 Discussion of the findings

From the findings of the study, rural governance means the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of the rural communities for the provisions of basic needs and development. In other words, it is the institutional arrangement (traditional and democratic institutions) by which the dividends of governance are enjoyed. This has confirmed the notion of Ekong (2003) that:

The two major governing institutions in rural communities of Nigeria are the traditional and modern Democratic institutions. Though there are other small groups such as the women associations, non-governmental organizations, professional bodies which have tremendous influence on governance, however, they are partners in progress.

The study confirmed that the traditional institution is made up of family, village and clan heads, with the paramount ruler at the helm of affairs in each of the local government area. While modern democratic institutions have the politicians, technocrats and other professionals as its managers. However, the authority and functions of the traditional institution are limited because it is drawn from tradition and customary practices, which in the words of Max Weber is described as “traditional authority” (Ekong, 2003). The modern democratic institution derives its authority and functions from the constitution, which Weber called “Legal Rational”. This suggests that modern democratic institution has more power and spread of influence than the traditional institution. In the light of this, findings show minimal contributions of rural governance to rural community development in Akwa Ibom State (table 5.)

Table 5: Contributions of rural governance to rural community development in Akwa Ibom State.

Traditional institution	Modern Democratic institution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning of roads, cleaning of paths, digging of boreholes, construction of market stalls through the directive of the traditional ruler enforce by the youths. 	Provision of social services such as cleaning of roads, provisions of drinkable water, building of market stalls, building of Town Hall etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mounting of local security outfit at strategic locations of the community, tagged “vigilante group”to checkmate the activities of criminals. 	The use of conventional police force, SSS, Civil Defence Corps, and cult groups as strategic security agents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grassroots mobilization for the discharge of civic responsibilities and protest against any form of injustices. 	The use of mass media radio, television, newspapers to reach the masses on matters of public interests.

Source: Field assessment, 2016.

The paramount ruler of Oro local government area, His Royal Majesty (HRM), Chief Odiong Akan during the interview observed that:

Without the traditional rulers law and order may unexpectedly breakdown, the peace and tranquillity of the locality may be disrupted and can affect negatively the realization of community organization, development and welfare services.

The remark suggests that, the democratic institution expressed in local government machinery relies on the traditional institution for the realization of the objectives of their policies. A principal officer from the Eket Local Government Area observed during interview session that:

Though we have police and state security services (SSS) at our disposal, there are some communities in which these agents cannot penetrate and so

we rely so much on the royal fathers and youths that are in such communities for access and enforcement of government policies.

In the light of this, there is need for synergy between the two institutions, though they have their differences most times. This synergy could create opportunities and possibilities through effective tapping of natural and human resources for community development. The study revealed that, often times, the inherent differences between these institutions turned out to be impediment to community development. In addition, such challenges as low education and awareness creation, misuse of public funds, influence of higher government on rural governing system, dumping ground for unproductive staff, lack of internally generated revenue capacity etc are some of the factors that impede community development in Akwa Ibom State.

6. Conclusion

Rural governance is known to be closer to the rural people and remain the channel with which influence of higher governments and good things of life can reach the people. But in real life, the disparity between the traditional and modern democratic institution, has wilfully truncated the promotion of rural transformation and encouraged rural backwardness. Beyond this, governance at the rural level has thrown up elite class, instead of identifying the “felt needs” of the people, it tends to impose” whatever needs”. Again, the conflict of interest and supremacy arising from faulty provision in the constitution does not help matters concerning governing institutions. The traditional institution would believe that politicians are imposition through “selectocracy”, the politicians hold that the traditional rulers are obsolete, archaic and fraught with ineffectiveness and inefficiency. But the traditional institution is required for the peace and stability of rural communities, therefore, its functions and responsibility should also be entrenched in the constitution, so that super-ordinate and subordinate relationship can be discouraged. A situation where the various local councils pay the traditional chiefs stipends every month, give the former the opportunity to dictate the direction of the community affairs. In all cases, the local councils control financial resources within and outside, and traditional rulers control only traditional and customary matters, obviously generate superior-inferior working relationship. Therefore, the two institutions need constitutional definition of functions to address issues of development, justice, participation, equal opportunity, and such, to remain the values of rural governance.

7. Recommendations

- Governance at the local level should be made to reach the poor. For instance, human capital development is necessary;
- The following areas are important for rural governance, sustainable management of natural resources, environmental degradation, water management and safe exploitation of forest resources;
- Rural governing institutions should broaden their scope, by involving consensus, among participating interest groups. For example, civil society, professional organizations can participate in policy formulation, implementation, decision making, with reference to allocation of development resources (traditional and modern).
- Governing institutions in rural communities should promote self-help, widen their scope of interaction to capture economic, political, social, ICT beyond the local boundary.
- The enabling laws should be made to define the role of traditional leaders in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria as a whole.

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