



**MEN S' VS WOMEN S' CULTURAL GROUPS: A POWERFUL CATALYST FOR
SUSTAINABILITY OF SELF-HELP COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN AWGU
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze the contribution of men s' as well as women s' cultural groups in Nigeria towards achieving sustainable national development. It is pertinent to note that that women as well as men are increasingly making impact in the area of sustainable development in various communities in Nigeria as it relates to self-help community development projects. Moreover, women are starting to assert themselves, challenging deep rooted patriarchal practices and beginning to negotiate new roles and opportunities towards sustainable development in Nigeria. The study adopted concurrent mixed method research design, using 370 respondents from town union associations and umu-ada associations from the five randomly selected communities in Awgulga of Enugu state. Data was collected with the use of questionnaire and in-depth interview and were analyzed using chi-square inferential statistics and thematic content analysis. The study found that people who belong to cultural associations involve more in sustainability of self-help community development projects in their communities than people who do not. It was also revealed in the study that men involve more in sustainability of self-help community development projects than women. The study therefore recommends that cultural associations like town union associations, age grade associations and umu-Ada associations should be encouraged by the government to take up the lead once again in the initiation and execution of self-help programs, and effort should be made by government and communities to ignite competition among the cultural associations.

Keywords: Self-help projects, community development, sustainable development, cultural groups

Introduction

Sustainability is a critical challenge for all development agencies as well communities in Nigeria. It is not possible to claim lasting impact in terms of community development and poverty reduction without ensuring this aspect of development (IFAD, 2008). Several



communities in Nigeria have suffered much developmental neglects and marginalization of all kinds. Otu (2011) reveals that in the recent past and still present, Nigeria, particularly the South East part of the country have been besieged by myriads of problems and challenges of sustainable development which no doubt, are linked to high level of poverty in the region. It therefore, becomes very difficult to embark on sustainable developmental projects to enhance the quality of life of the people owing to the limited resources. In Nigeria, communities depend on government for development. In such an instance, there is no link between sustainability of projects provided by the government and the interest of the people. Projects provided by the government in many communities could not be sustained because there is no commitment on the part of the people. It is a “government project”, not “our project”.

Time was when schools, hospitals and churches were built through communal efforts. Today, communities tend to depend and over rely on government for provision of socio-economic infrastructure and amenities. Unfortunately, and to every one’s dismay, government at all levels find it difficult to attend to the projects of the communities at the same time due to compelling priorities. On the other hand, the absence of the traditional groups seems to have taken away the kindred spirit and coherence as well as the communal enterprising endeavours among the members of many rural communities. Individualism has taken over. Even when town unions try to embark on self-help projects, such projects are met with challenges of corruption by devious officials along the stakeholder chain who would want to plan and execute the projects with little or no honesty and accountability. Thus, corruption and unaccountability pass as great challenges.

Often, it is more difficult to sustain community development projects to the point where they can continuously provide useful services, than it is to start them. This, at least in part, seems to rise from a lack of sustained community interest and support. In many communities, lack of access to resources confines people to abject poverty and hinders community development. Thus, their livelihood and survival as a people depend on limited resources that they can muster to exist. In this case, there are often a class of



wealthy people and another class of the poor. Women and children are the most vulnerable in such communities. Moreover, inequalities make it possible for a group of powerful people to mismanage available resources and waste public fund. In a situation where there is poverty, low level of income, high unemployment, low level of education, harmful cultural practices, lack of access to basic needs of livelihood like Nigeria, it is difficult for people to team up for sustainability of community development projects owing to the differences in socio-economic status of the communities. Where people attempt to come together, in most cases, many community members will not participate due to poverty, illiteracy and inability to contribute their share to the development of the community.

Corruption and sharp practices are much and so hinder the easy flow and completion of self-help projects in Nigeria. Individuals undertake independent ventures and projects without involving others or the community. Sinking of water boreholes, establishment of fuel/service stations, markets/plazas, hospitals, hotels, play grounds and entertainment centers are now being established solely by individuals or group of persons purely for profit to the exclusion of other persons who can only benefit when they pay. Few persons can have the spirit of charity to donate such facilities for the common good and welfare of the people. In the present era individualism is in vogue. Governments now court the partnership of well to do individuals and organizations in the funding and execution of development projects under the public-private participation (PPP) policy.

Before the onset of colonial administration, communities across Nigeria had employed communal efforts as the mechanism for mobilizing community resources to provide physical improvement and functional facilities in the social, political and economic aspects of their lives. Communal labour was employed in constructing homesteads, clearing farm lands, roads or path way, construction of bridges and for the provision of other social infrastructural facilities required by the people. Some of the relevant institutions were the age-grades and the village councils. Though some of these institutions have persisted, the difference between self-help activities undertaken in the past and those prosecuted today are not hard to find.



By the beginning of the war in 1967, the observations of Sir James Robertson, aptly typified the state of development needs and awareness and the immense role the governments expected self-help activities to play to compliment their efforts. After the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), the need for massive reconstruction work further aroused the people a revival of the spirit of self-help which is deeply rooted in their rich traditions. Most communities realized that the only way for immediate reconstruction of the war ravaged facilities was through self-help. This period also marked the evolution of a multiplicity of social clubs with aims consonant with social insurance and self-help.

The period between 1973 and 2007 marked a watershed in rural development efforts in Nigeria. The period witnessed deliberate government efforts at mobilizing the people for rural development. A number of task forces and bodies were set up to oversee, organize and to direct partnership with the people on self-help activities. They include: Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural infrastructure (DFRRI), Rural Electrification Schemes; Credit Schemes to small holders through various specialized institutions such as People's Bank, Agricultural and Cooperative Development Bank, Community Banks, NERFUND, SME Credit Schemes, the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Universal Primary Education Schemes and Low Cost Housing Schemes, Health Scheme as the Primary Health Care Programme, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Better Life for Rural Women Programme as well as the Family Support Programme (FSP). More recent programmes include the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) as well as the Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Schemes (SMIEIS). The various state governments had also articulated blueprints on rural development, adopting the Integrated Rural Development Strategy as their strategic option to carry development to the masses of the people. From the foregoing historical analysis, two principles underlying self-help activities have emerged. These are (a) the principle of individual and corporate survival and (b) the principle of societal "felt need".

Study Objectives

The objectives of the study include

1. To ascertain whether female are more involved in sustainability self-help community development projects than males in Awgu LGA.



2. To find out if people who belong to cultural associations involve more in sustainability of self-help projects than those who do not belong.
3. To identify the cultural groups that are more involved in sustainability of self-help community development projects in Awgu LGA.

Brief Review of Relevant Literature

Ogunleye-Adetona & Oladeinde (2013), attest that the idea of self-help and community assistance which form the basis of the present-day community development is deeply rooted in the rich traditions of the African people in which evidences abound of how communities have, for generations, successfully organized themselves to construct roads, build bridges, palaces, market stalls, dwelling houses, among others. Akpomovie (2010) revealed that self-help projects in some communities did not receive any support from either the local, state or federal government.

According to Chief Mebradu Johnson:

The projects were executed by the communities through the money realized from fund raising for such projects, donations, fines and so on. Similarly, the projects executed in our community (Urhuoka) are being maintained through the sweat and commitment of the villagers and those who were fortunate to get political appointment (Personal Communication, 2008).

Akanle (2011) opined that cultures hold the key to growth, oneness, integration, identity and development ultimately. The confounding power of cultures to drive growth and development in the communities can never be underestimated especially when they are in their traditional forms.

Otu (2011) offers a detailed explanation of community associations: They are traditionally non-formal, non-state, non-commissioned and non-partisan structures/institutions/bodies made up of members who share common heritage, identity, interest and goals, and whose activities are geared towards improving and/or promoting the common goal and good of their host town and community. Tango (2009)



remarked that every community has a traditional structure to ensure the participation of inhabitants in projects and programmes that have positive effects on the life of the majority. Community or traditional associations like age grades and so on tend to pull resources and harness their collective ideas together for various projects such as infrastructural development (road and culvert construction, electricity, civic centers, provisions or renovations of schools, and health centers, provision of social amenities such as portable water, improved latrines, and recreation facilities, donations by individuals and groups, improve sanitation and sustainable environment.

Akpomuvie (2010) in his study on self-help strategy for rural development in Urhoboland in Delta State found out that there are many traditional associations/organizations in all communities in Urhoboland ranging from youth organizations to age grade association, town unions and so on. Of the respondents interviewed in the area, 52% belong to at least one community based organization. Men and women belong to such organizations (48% are men while women have 42%) while the remaining 10% are indifferent to such organizations.

It was also revealed that interest in community matters is shown through contribution to local projects. In the 2006 survey, 40% of the respondents reported that they had contributed to the sustainability of at least one project. More men than women reported such contributions. The most commonly way of contribution was to donate money (78% made financial contribution while 22% contributed their services). In this study we have seen how roads, bridges, schools, maternity centers and town halls have been completed and maintained through self-help by the local people through their various socio-cultural associations (Akpomuvie, 2010).

Omeje (2014) on Challenges of self-help projects in rural communities of South East States of Nigeria: The Case of Igbo-Eze South Area of Enugu State using content analytical approach and oral interview revealed that traditional institutions like Age-grades, Umu-okpu (titled women) Umu-ada (daughters of the land), Ndi-Oha (titled men), Ndiichie (elders, usually men) have always been associated positively with competitive eagerness for initiating, executing and sustaining communal self-help projects in all Igbo



communities. The study also revealed that mass sensitization through town criers with traditional gongs has helped in the mobilization and orientation of communities and members on the proposed projects which facilitates common understanding and participation in sustaining the community self-help projects.

According to Ojameruaye (2005), his study on Culture and Economic development in Urhoboland revealed that men are organized into 4 age grades, which are Ekpako (from about 60 years and above), Ivwraghwa (from about 30 to 60 years), Otuorere (from about 50 years to 30years) and Imitete (from about 5 years to 15 years); the women are organized into 3 age grades, which are Ekwokweya (women passed child-bearing age, i.e. from about 50 years and above), Eghweya (married women in the child-bearing age, i.e. from about 15 to 50), and Emete (unmarried girls, usually below 15 years). The Ekpako (i.e. elderly men) are usually the custodians of the culture of the people. On the other hand, the Ivwraghwa (i.e. adult men) supervise the community self-help projects, execute and enforce orders of the village or town. The Otuorere (the young men or youth) helped in defending the society and do heavy (public) work such as clearing of bushes, building of wooden bridges and earth roads as well as made sure that community self-help projects in the village are well taken care of. The Imitete (young boys) help to keep the village, markets, hall and so on clean and are send on errands.

Concept of Community Development The United Nations defines community development as a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. It is a broad term given to the practices of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens and professionals to improve various aspects of communities, typically aiming to build stronger and more resilient local communities. Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with the skills they need to effect change within their communities. These skills are often created through the formation of social groups working for a common agenda.

Community development includes all strategies, interventions or coordinated activities at the community level aimed at bringing about social and economic development.



Ahamefula&Nosike, (2010) defines community development as the process by which a set of technical, social, cultural, and institutional measures are implemented with and for the dwellers of the communities, with the aim of improving socio-economic conditions. Harrison (2000) noted that community participation is an important component of community development and reflects a bottom-up approach to problem solving and that through citizen participation, a broad cross-section of the community is encouraged to identify and articulate their own goals, design their own methods of change, and pull their resources in the problem-solving process. The involvement of appropriate stakeholders in development projects is important as well as planning, implementing and sustaining of public programmes that can impact positively on the life of the communities.

Concept of Sustainable Development The first Polish definition of Sustainable development was published in the report “Eco-development in Poland” in 1992. According to the definition, Sustainable development also known as eco-development, is where people provide for limitations due to the finite character of the planet and the rhythm of nature independent of human. It is a strategy for achieving dignified life within what is physically and biologically possible. It guarantees meeting basic needs of present and future generation while maintaining the stability of the natural environment and natural diversity of both species and ecosystem. In Polish legislation, Sustainable development is understood as such a socio-economic development in which the process of integrating political, economic and social activities takes place with keeping balance of nature and the durability of basic natural process in order to ensure the ability to meet basic needs of the communities and citizens of both the present and future generations (The Environmental Protection Law, 2008).

Sustainable development understood as a concept is defined as a sustainable improvement in the quality of life of present and future generations through the development of an appropriate balance between the three capitals: “economic, human and natural” (Piontek F, &Piontek B, 2009). On their part, Hsueh and Yan (2011) observed that Sustainable Community Development (SCD) aims to integrate economic, social and environment objectives in community development. SCD is based on a consideration of



the relationships between economic factors and other community elements such as housing, education, the natural environment, health accessibility and the arts. SCD has emerged as a compelling alternative to conventional approaches to development. It is a participatory, holistic and inclusive process that leads to positive, concrete changes in communities by creating employment, reducing poverty, restoring the health of the natural environment, stabilizing local economies and increasing community control. IFAD (2007) defined sustainability as ensuring that the institutions supported through projects and the benefits realized are maintained and continue after the end of the project. This definition acknowledges that assessment of sustainability entails determining whether the result of the project will be sustained in the medium or even longer term without continued external assistance.

Jepson (2007) maintained that sustainable development is premised on continuing and at the local level; it is about residents looking ahead not just twenty years, but a hundred years or more and finding their community still striving. Sustainable development is primarily initiated from the perspective of environmental protection to maintain the progress and development of human society. It includes the demand for contemporary and future generations, national sovereignty, international equity, natural resources, ecological carrying capacity, the combination of environment and development and other important content (Lijing, Yonghong&Yanli, 2011). Don &Kutzmark (2006) noted that sustainable development can enhance a sense of place, reduce crime, mitigate natural hazards, conserve energy and resources, preserve culture and heritage, improve traffic circulation and reduce waste.

Challenges Facing Self-Help Community Development Projects In Nigeria

In the past, towns, villages and communities were organized in a way that every member of each community or society was roundly known and identified in terms of family background (pedigree), strength of personal character, and his individual ability and capacity; and so every person was held as an integral part of the mainstream society. At present, this state of oneness, cohesion and integration seems to have been eroded by



Western civilization. The age grade system, the Umu-Ada (Daughters of the land), the Umu-Okpu (titled women), and the Ndi -Oha or Ndi-Ama (titled men) institutions appear to be dwindling and this has posed some challenges in the organization and practice of self-help project programs in many rural communities in Igbo land (Omeje, 2014).

The following stand out remarkably as factors militating against the initiation and successful implementation of self-help programs among rural communities in present day Igboland.

- Inept leadership within the communities leading to poor projects conceptualization, costing and prioritization, and the consequent delay in completion or abandonment of such projects
- Low participation as a result of inappropriate location of projects or due to other nepotism reasons in connection with project location and appointment of implementers.
- Misappropriation of public funds by officials in some communities.
- Lack of organizational ability, (in terms of, technical know-how, managerial competence, for example), lack of moral and financial support, absence of other technical or logistic assistance, etc (Omeje, 2014).

Theoretical Trust

Modernization theory was developed by Walter Rostow in 1950. Modernization theory generally looks at the societal developmental process. It is the transmission from a traditional mode of production to more industrialized or mechanized mode of production that is aimed at societal development. For Rostow (1962), development is divided into five stages which are; the traditional society, the pre-condition for take-off stage, the take-off stage, the maturity stage, and the stage of high-mass consumption. Modernization theory makes the claim that Western capitalist values and practices are the basis for “modernizing” third world countries and helping them become self-sustaining.. It also looks at internal dynamics while referring to social and cultural structures and the



adaptation of new technologies. In this model, the modernization of a society required the destruction of the indigenous culture and its replacement by a more Westernized one. Consequently, world communities and countries forms groups and organizations aimed at following the same steps of the developed nations so as to be termed developed. These gave birth to the concept of self-help in Nigerian communities where communities come together, pull their resources together and work tirelessly to achieve and maintain developmental projects as their communities seem to be left behind in development yet a developing country like Nigeria is still struggling her way to development due to factors like; lack of adequate funding, lack of basic equipment, execution of sub-standard projects, fraud , dishonesty, and corruption among members/leaders, politics rivalries and envy and Inability to accept change in traditional and cultural practices. Okwusi (2008) and Udensi (2013) revealed that improper and inadequate awareness, low level of exposure, non-challant attitude, insufficient training, lack of encouragement by community leaders, intermittent change of government and selfishness on the part of the leaders were the factors that militate against self-help community development projects in Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted concurrent mixed methods research design. The study area is Awgu LGA of Enugu State. The cultural associations in Awgu LGA include Town Union Association, Age Grade Association, Youth Organisations, Umu-ada Association, cabinet Members and Masquerade societies, etc. Due to the nature of this study therefore, the target population of the study was derived from the categorized groups within the communities of the study area. The researcher purposively categorized the communities of study into two sub-groups namely: - town union associations and umu-ada associations which are men and women groups respectively. Out of the one thousand, two hundred and sixty-six active members of Town union associations and Umu-ada

associations from the two categorized cultural groups from the twenty communities in the study area, Therefore the sample size for the study is three hundred and seventy members of town union associations and umu-ada associations from the five randomly selected towns in Awgu local government area (Agbudu, Ogbaku, Ihe, Mgbowo, and Ugbo) with ten participants (two from each town) for the In-Depth Interview (IDI). Questionnaire however forms the quantitative instrument for the study while the IDI was constructed to compliment the quantitative data. The data collected was processed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and was analyzed using chi-square (X^2) inferential statistics while qualitative data obtained from the In-depth Interview (IDI) was analyzed using the manual thematic content analysis technique.

Research Findings/Results

(a) Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (Personal Data of Respondents)

To ascertain the socio-economic profile of respondents involved in the study, data from the field survey was scrutinized to obtain the sex, age, marital status, highest educational attainment, religious affiliation, and occupation, name of cultural association and income per annum of the respondents. The socio-demographic profile or data of the respondents is presented in table 1 below

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Demographic Characteristics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Distribution of respondents by sex	Male	189	51.4
	Female	179	48.6
	Total	368	100.0
Distribution of respondents by age	27-36	29	7.9
	37-46	166	45.1
	47-56	132	35.9
	57-66	36	9.8
	67 and above	5	1.4
	Total	368	100.0
Distribution of respondents by marital status	Single	18	4.9
	Married	328	89.1
	Widowed	16	4.3
	Divorced	3	.8
	Separated	3	.8
	Total	368	100.0



Distribution of respondents by educational qualification	No formal education	17	4.6
	FSLC	85	23.1
	WASSCE, NECO,GCE	232	63.0
	OND, NCE, HND, B.Sc	31	8.4
	M.Sc, Ph.D	3	.8
	Total	368	100.0
Distribution of respondents by religious affiliation	Christian	327	89.1
	Muslim	0	00
	African Traditional Religion	31	8.4
	Atheist	10	2.5
	Total	368	100.0
	Distribution of respondents by occupation	Farming	96
Trading		183	49.7
Civil Service		33	9.0
Self-Employed		47	12.8
Unemployed		9	2.4
Total		368	100.0
Distribution of respondents by income level per annum	0-200,000	61	16.5
	201,000-400,000	122	33.2
	401,000-600,000	149	40.5
	601,000-800,000	29	7.9
	801,000 and above	7	1.9
	Total	368	100.0
Distribution of respondents by cultural association	Umu-Ada Association	179	48.6
	Town Union Association	189	51.4
	Total	368	100.0

Field Survey, 2019

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents generally by sex, age, marital status, highest formal educational attainment, religious affiliation, occupation, cultural association and income per annum. The table shows that males constituted 51.4% of the total respondents while 48.6% were females. A majority of the respondents fall within the age groups of 37-46, 166(45.1%) and 47-56, 132(35.9%). Another outstanding feature of the sample is that with regards to marital status, majority of the respondents 328(89.1%) were married while 18(4.9%) of them were single. The widowed, divorced and separated respondents were the least 16(4.3%), 3(0.8%), and 3(0.8%) respectively). In terms of religious affiliation, the table shows that an over whelming majority of the respondents 327(89.1%) were Christians, while 31(8.4%) of the respondents practice African traditional religion and others were Atheists 10(2.5%). The result on the

respondents' occupation revealed that majority of the respondents are into trading 183(49.7%) while 96(26.1%) are farmers, civil servants 33(9.0%), self-employed 47(12.8%) and 9(2.4%) of the respondents were unemployed. Finally, the income per annum of the respondents shows that a quite number of the respondents earn between 401,000-600,000, 149(40.5%) per annum. Furthermore, 122(33.2%) of the respondents earn between 201,000-400,000 per annum, while 61(16.5%) of the respondents earn 0-200,000 per annum and 29(7.9%) of the respondents earn 601,000-800,000 per annum with only 7(1.9%) earning 801,000 and above per annum. The result on cultural association also shows that 179(48.6%) of the respondents belong to Umu-Ada association while 189(51.4%) of the respondents belong to Town Union association.

(b) Analysis of Research/ Study Objectives

The findings of this study are thematically presented in relation to stated research objectives:

Study Objective 1: To ascertain whether female are more involved in sustainability self-help community development projects than males in Awgu LGA.

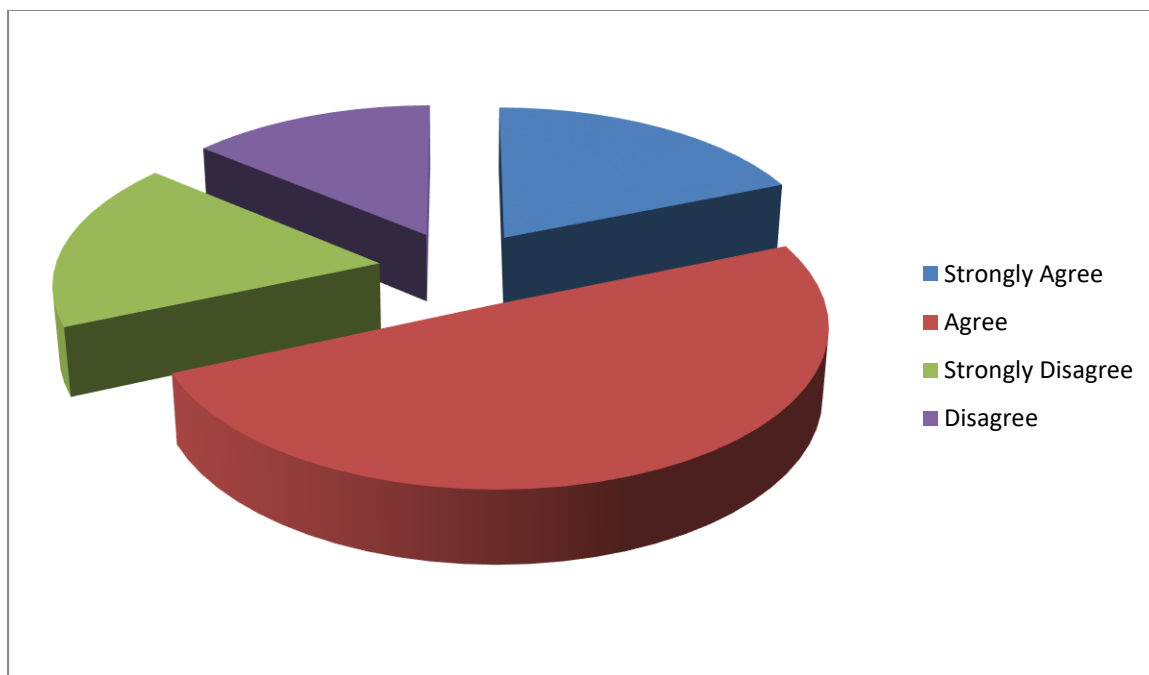


Figure 1: Involvement in the sustainability of self-help community development projects is associated with gender

Field Survey, 2019

Fig. 1 shows that as many as 49.7% of the respondents agreed that involvement in sustainability of self-help community development projects is associated with gender, 18.8% of the respondents strongly agreed, 17.7% of them strongly disagreed that involvement in sustainability of self-help community development projects is associated with gender while 13.9% of the respondents disagreed.

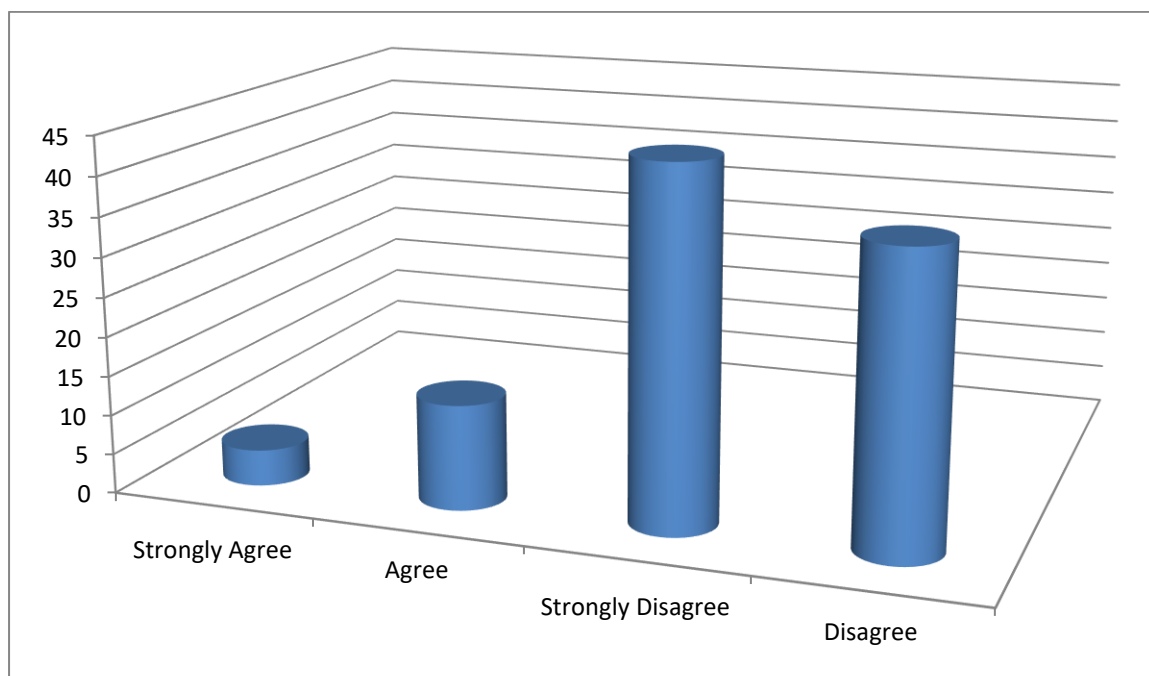


Figure 2: Females are more likely to be involved in the sustainability of self-help community development projects than males (Source: Field Survey, 2019)

Fig. 2 shows that as many as 44.8% of the respondents of the respondents strongly disagreed that females are more likely to be involved in sustainability of self-help community development projects than males, 37.2%of the respondents also disagreed while as low as 4.6% of the respondents strongly agreed.

Research Objective 2; To find out if people who belong to cultural associations involve more in sustainability of self-help projects than those who do not belong.

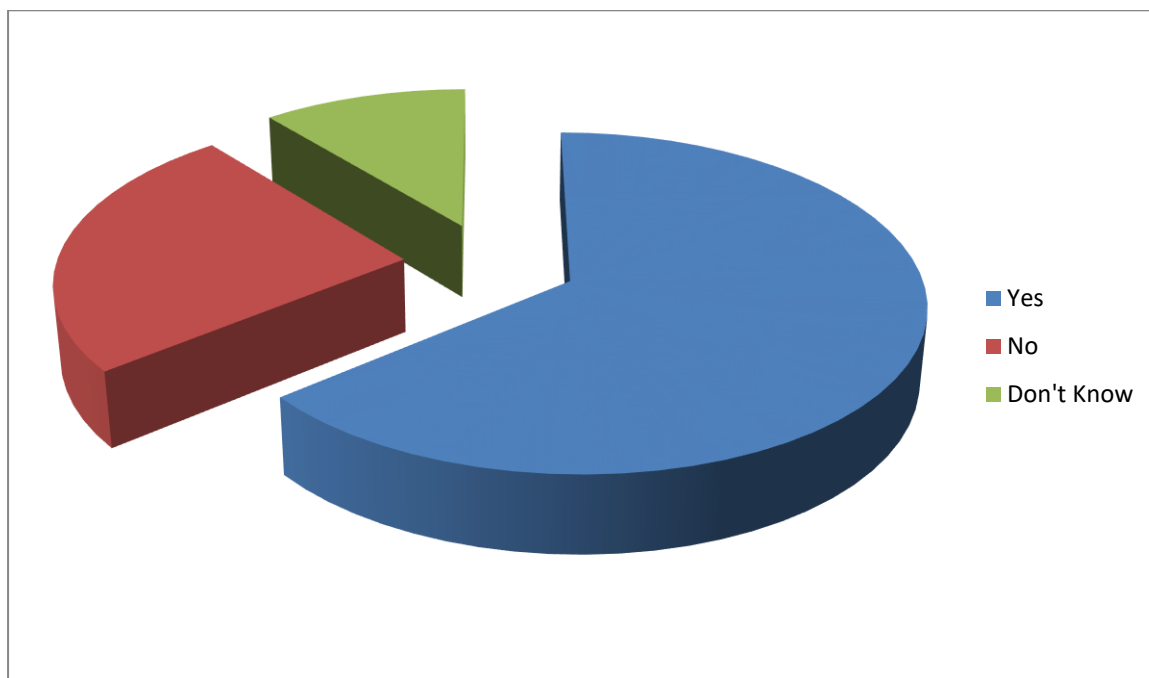


Fig. 3: People who belong to cultural associations are more involved in sustainability of self-help community development projects than those who do not belong.

Fig. 3 shows that a majority of the respondents (88.6%) said YES, meaning that people who belong to traditional or cultural association are perceived to be involved in self-help community development projects more than people who do not belong to traditional or cultural association, while just 6.8%of the respondents were of the contrary opinion. It could be deduced from the above data that people who belong to traditional or cultural



associations involve more in self-help community development projects than people who do not belong to traditional or cultural association in Awgu LGA.

An IDI respondent noted that:

(Smiles) Yes! they do, in fact as a matter of fact, one of the Age grade in my community that is the Ife-Adigo age grade have contributed a lot to these projects and as well the town union were also instrumental because I can remember that they (town union) were asked for assistant by the women and they were able to send some cash for starting the project. Again, the youths of my town at a time helped in clearing the land where the school was to be built (Male, Teacher, Age 44).

Research Objective 3: To identify the cultural groups that are more involved in sustainability of self-help community development projects in Awgu LGA.

Table 2: Cultural groups that are involved in self-help community development projects.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Which group is more likely to be involved in sustainability of self-help community development projects	Age grade association	64	19.6
	Town Union association	150	46.0
	Youth Organization	36	11.0
	Umu-Okpu (Titled women)	9	2.8
	Umu-Ada (Daughters of the land)	59	18.1
	Ndi-Oha (Titled men)	4	1.2
	Ndiichie (Elders, usually men)	4	1.2
	Total	326	100.0

Field Survey, 2019



Table 1 shows that a majority of the respondents 46.0% were of the view that town union associations involve more in sustainability of self-help community development projects. Age grade association (1.6%), while 18.1% of the respondents were of the opinion that Umu-ada associations involve more in sustainability of self-help community development projects in Awgu LGA.

Discussion

The findings of the study also revealed that a majority of the respondents strongly disagreed that females are involved in self-help community development projects than males. This is therefore consistent with the findings of a similar study by Akpomovie (2010) which revealed that majority of the male respondents reported that they have contributed or have been involved in self-help projects.

With regards to cultural factors sustaining self-help community development projects, the findings revealed that a majority of the respondents believed that people who belong to cultural associations are involved in the sustainability of self-help community development projects than those who do not belong to cultural association. This finding is consistent with the findings of Akpomovie (2010) who opined that people who involved in sustainability of self-help projects belong to traditional association/organization in all communities ranging from youth organization to age grade association, town unions and so on. According to him, 52% belong to at least one community-based organization, men and women belong to such organization.

In addition, the findings of the study also show that a majority of the respondents perceived town union association as the cultural group that involve more in the sustainability of self-help community development projects. This finding differs from the findings of Aluaugbe (2008) which posited that development projects available in the local government were only executed by the effort of the town union who work tirelessly to provide social amenities to the citizenry while it was revealed in this present study that



these traditional association like the age-grade association not only execute these projects but also go a long way in sustaining them. These findings also contradict the report of Ogunleye Adetona and Oladeinde (2010) who posited that community unions/associations such as age grades and town union contributed only in the execution of self-help community development projects but as well help in the sustainability of these self-help projects.

Conclusion

The major objective of this study was to investigate the contribution of cultural groups towards sustaining self-help community development projects in Awgu local government area of Enugu state. This study yielded important findings and has added to the understanding of the issue in sustainability of self-help community development projects. It has also identified cultural factors that facilitate sustainability of self-help projects in Awgu Local government area.

Sustainability of self-help community development projects is paramount in community development as this will help to enhance the living condition of people in Awgu Local government area in particular and Enugu state in general. Cultural associations are at the center of the sustainability of these self-help projects in the Local government area. Both men and women are increasingly making a significant impact in the area of sustainable development. The study therefore concluded that to ensure a virile and viable community development that will bring about sustainable development in Awgu local government area and Nigeria in general, there is need for proper participation of men as well as women in sustaining self-help community development projects in their various communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:-



1. Cultural associations like town union associations, age grade associations and umu-Ada associations should be encouraged by the government to take up the lead once again in the initiation and execution of self-help programs, and effort should be made by government and communities to ignite competition among the associations. This will also engender appreciable love and cohesion among the people thereby providing the much required synergy for team work.
2. The government, non-governmental organizations, multi-national companies and other business organizations should empower communities to ensure that the projects are well taken care of.
3. Joint project execution by cultural groups should be encouraged as this will increase their capacity, strength and bring about a greater level of sustainable development as resources are pulled together thus, helping to eliminate some constraints such as finance to some extent.
- 4 There is the need for these cultural groups to encourage people to join them or for them to form groups to contribute their quota towards socio-economic development of the area. It forms the bedrock of project sustainability strategy among the groups.



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