

Democracy, Towns Unions and Development of Rural Roads in Nigeria: A Focus on Selected Rural Communities in Ebonyi State

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Abstract

This study examined how democratic governance stimulates the contributions of town unions to provide and maintain rural roads in Nigeria. The study was provoked by the need to empirically test the assumption of some scholars that democratic is key to stimulating towns to develop rural communities. The study was carried out in twelve selected rural communities chosen across the three senatorial zones of Ebonyi state. The data for the study were gathered with questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), observation and documentary methods. The study adopted community action theory as its framework of analysis. The data were analyzed using simple percentage, contingency tables, and histogram while chi square was used for the test of hypotheses. The findings revealed that democratic governance has enhanced contributions of town unions in the construction and regular maintenance of rural roads in Ebonyi State. The study equally revealed that lack of enlightenment, illiteracy, and poverty among the rural dwellers poses challenge to town unions' contributions to development of rural roads. The study recommended that government should provide periodic subventions to town unions to enable them mobilize adequate funds for the construction and maintenance of rural roads. Besides, leadership trainings should be organized on regular basis to educate and enlighten town union executives on the best global practices on rural development.

Keywords: Democratic governance, contributions, towns unions, development, rural communities.

1. Introduction

There is a growing concern among development scholars and policy makers on understanding rural development as a key to overall socio-economic development of third world countries. This philosophy is paradigm shift from that of the 1960s and 1970s when economic theorists and development actors centred on growth resulting from national economic development plans and their multiplier effects on

massive capital investment. The logic then was that once the national economy was made to flourish, the development of rural economy automatically follow suit. The thinking equally influenced and dominated the research and numerous publications on the subject of rural development during the seventies and eighties. The publications highlighted on rural development as a solution to most problems of third world countries.

The shift in paradigm stems from the failure of national development programmes to attract the much desired rural development during the period. This development further re-kindled the interest of scholars and other critical stakeholder on finding a better way to development rural communities. As a result, various international governmental organizations embarked on survey and studies of some aspects of rural development in third world countries. The surveys led to the availability of reliable reports which furnished the stakeholders on the up-to-date data and analysis of rural development situations. Most of the reports delved into such aspects of rural development such as the dimensions of rural poverty, the demographic factor in rural development economy, nutrition and food security, health and literacy. The increased knowledge on rural development provided to these developmental organizations naturally led to better appreciation of the gaps in rural development, the dimensions of the problems and the policy options opened to Nigerian state.

From late 1980s to the late 1990s town unions took a centre stage as critical keys in rural development. Unarguably, poor performance of government development programmes in meeting the socioeconomic needs of the citizens was the reasons behind the proliferation of town in Nigeria during these periods. Wahab (2000) observed that people in developing nations have until recently looked up to their governments to meet their basic socio-economic demands. Of a truth, governments in African nations have evolved top-down and bottom-up approaches to achieve sustainable development of their people. These include establishment of lead industries at key centres so as to create job opportunities, provide basic infrastructure and utilize regional natural and man-made resources to stimulate growth and economic development that would spread to lagging regions (Perroux, 1955; Abegunde, 2003). Besides, Agbola (2002) noted that successive Nigerian governments have responded to both rural and urban problems by evolving poverty alleviation programmes to help stir development simultaneously at the grassroots. These programmes include the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Community Banks, Directorate of Foods and Rural Roads Infrastructure, Better Life for Rural Women, National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP) among others.

The failure of governments' top-down approach and lack of involvement of the people at the grassroots in the bottom-up strategy have weakened the confidence of the public in the central authorities. Communities therefore seek solace in indigenous institutions, which pressurize government for attention to development problems in their communities and/or undertake development programmes and projects that they observe that are very needful in their immediate communities. The indigenous organizations are associated with self-help (Ogundipe, 2003). They constitute the media for resources mobilization to confront local challenges. These include the finance and execution of projects, lobbying and nomination of representatives to government offices to air their views and press their needs and developing human resources against future developmental needs of their immediate communities. Thus, their impacts have been felt in the areas of economic development, policy matters, health and infrastructure, environmental and physical development among others (Agbola, 1998; Akinola, 2000; Akinbode, 1974; Onibokun and Faniran, 1995).

Following the acknowledged accomplished achievements of the community based organizations in the late 1990s there have been expectations that democratic governance that was ushered in 1999 would invigorate and spur more participation of community based organizations in rural development drive. There is a general consensus among development scholars that democratic governance holds the key to popular participation of local governance actors such as town unions to development communities (Kiyaga-Nsubuga, 2015). This study evaluates the capacity of democracy to enhance the contributions of town union to the construction and maintenance of rural roads in Ebonyi State since the inception of democracy in 1999.

2. Statement of the Problem

One of the challenges facing the Nigerian state since independence is how to improve the living standard of the rural dwellers. Even though about 70% of the country's population lives in the rural areas, the rural areas are yet to witness significant level of development. This is evident in the apparent lack of basic infrastructural facilities especially in the construction and maintenance of rural roads (Burgess *et al.* 2013; Onyeozu, 2010; Agboola, Ifesanya & Akanmu 2012).

Abah (2010) observed that the most evident display of Nigeria underdevelopment condition is the rural areas and that the deplorable condition of the Nigerian rural health sectors is emphatic. Very curious and most worrisome is that the rural health development policies and programmes initiated and implemented by governments at all levels over the years have not yielded the desired results. The rural dwellers in Nigeria still lack access to basic health facilities water, sanitation, hospitals and good laboratories despite all efforts made by both government and non-governmental organizations. The failure of rural development programmes at the period was blamed on the failure of Nigerian state to embrace democratic governance. Following this assertion, there have been expectations among academics and government officials that the realization of democratic governance in 1999 would invigorate and spur more participation of the town unions in the provision of health facilities.

The above thinking logically becomes justifiable when weighed against the backdrop of the assertion that democratic governance is key to increased popular participation of town unions in rural development (Kiyaga-Nsubuga, 2015) There is therefore the need to empirically test the assertion in Ebonyi State after seventeen years of democratic rule. To carry out this study, the researcher raises the following questions; (1) Has democratic governance improved the contributions of town unions to the construction and maintenance of rural roads in Ebonyi State?

(2) What could be done to enhance the contributions of town unions to the construction and maintenance of rural roads in Ebonyi State?

Town Unions and Construction of Rural Roads

Burgess *et al.* (2013) examined the contribution of democratic governance to road building in Kenya from 1963 to 2011. Specifically, the study examines whether the transition in and out of democracy under the same president constrains or exacerbates expenditure on roads. The study applied descriptive survey design. The area of study includes seven Kikuyu dominant districts and six Kalenjin dominant districts. The data collected were analyzed using two approaches, a graphical approach and a regression approach. The results showed that between 1963 to 2011 periods, districts that share the ethnicity of the president received twice, as much expenditure on roads and have four times the length of paved roads built. This is unequivocal evidence of positive relationship between democratic governance and roads construction. Even though the study examined how democratic governance facilitated the construction of roads but failed to emphasize on how democracy could spur town unions to embark on the construction of roads in rural communities which is the focus of this study.

In another study, Agboola, Ifesanya & Akanmu (2012) examined the contributions of town unions to funding of rural roads projects in rural communities in Akinyele and Kajola Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The study made use of descriptive survey and applied the instrumentality of questionnaire in the generation of data while chi square analytical technique was used for data analysis. The findings revealed that the town unions in Kajola Local Government Area of Oyo State carried more of roads rehabilitation project between 1996 and 2011. It concluded that the town unions made some significant contributions in the rehabilitation of rural roads in Oyo State within the period under review. However, the study failed to establish how the respondents were sampled, in addition to demonstrating the trend in terms of contributions of town unions to rural development in a democratic dispensation which is the basis of this study.

Onyeozu (2010) carried out a study that focused on analysis of contributions town unions to the development of social amenities such as rural roads in Rivers State, Nigeria. The data for study were collected with the aid of structured questionnaire from 960 randomly selected respondents in the study

area and analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that town unions in Rivers State contributed significantly to the building and renovation of community roads. The weakness of this study lies in the fact that the study is too general as it fails to segregate the study area into urban and rural areas which would show how town unions contributed to the development of these areas respectively.

In separate study, Ugwu (2013) investigated the contributions of town unions to the development of rural roads in some communities in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu state of Nigeria. The study utilized survey method through self report technique of data collection which deals mostly with sourcing information from the primary sources and analytical induction sourcing information from secondary sources. Data collected were analyzed using quantitative methods. The study revealed that town unions in Nsukka LGA embarked on road rehabilitation covering a total 46.5 kilometers of roads at an estimated cost of N23,550,000 and expenditure of N25,050,000 on roads constructions as of 2010. The survey also indicated that majority (81%) of the respondents agreed that Town unions contributed positively to rehabilitation of roads in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu. Despite the beauty of the work in segregating the contributions of town unions to this sector, it failed to explain how democratic governance could enhance contributions of town unions to construction of rural roads.

Ibem (2009) examined town unions to the provision of infrastructural development such as rural roads in low-income communities in developing countries. The study was carried out in Ohafia, in Abia state of Nigeria. The study employed primary data that were generated from field-work enquiries with the aid of questionnaire. The sampling frame consisted of the 26 communities in the town. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used in selecting six communities based on a number of factors, namely, geographical and autonomous community representations, absence of local government administrative presence, and the existence of at least two completed and two ongoing community-initiated developments projects, as well as five town unions.

The findings indicated that the principal sources of fund for financing community development projects came from levies, voluntary donations, fines, interest on loans to members and bank deposits. Relying on the data from a survey, the study identified six organizations and three funding arrangements in infrastructure provision in the communities. Using this case-study, this study attempted to identify how the mobilization of resources in project initiation, design, implementation and funding influenced the type of infrastructure projects. He concludes that the findings have conceptual and policy implications for understanding the socio-economic and political dynamics in harnessing local resources and integrating community-based approaches into development process in developing countries.

Toyobo & Muili (2008) investigated constraints militating against effectiveness of community development projects in Ilesa Local Government Area. Data for this study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources, field observations, oral interviews, focus group discussion and intensive literature search. The primary data were collected through the use of two sets of questionnaire. From the sample frame of three hundred of twenty four (324) town unions in the area, ninety seven (97) of the town unions were interviewed using random sampling technique. The data were analysed using simple statistical techniques in form of frequency tables. The study showed that town unions actually financed and executed rural road projects based on the financial capabilities of the town unions. Most of the projects done by town unions were in the areas feeder road construction, road rehabilitation, construction of culverts and bridges.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts “community action theoretical model” as its framework of analysis. The community action theoretical model was propounded by Freire in 1973. The theory emphasizes the need for communities to collectively strengthen their capacity to develop through educational (Kulig, 2000).

Implicit in this theory is that residents in poor communities can team together to attain socio economic development (Boreham, 2004) through education. This means that community action model involves participatory action approaches and is asset based. That is to say that it builds on the strengths of a community to create changes from within (Racher, 2007). Its intention is to change by building community capacity, working in collaboration with communities and providing a framework for residents to acquire skills and resources necessary for assessing their socio economic conditions (Lavery, 2005). When they have done this, they can plan, implement and evaluate actions designed to improve those conditions.

This means that the model is designed to increase the capacity of communities and organisations in addressing their socio-economic determinants that will positively influence development in their rural communities (Anderson & McFarlane, 2004). The relevance of this theory to this study is hinged on the fact that it can help us to explain the contributions of town development unions in the funding of basic education and health facilities in rural communities in Ebonyi state. From the above theoretical proposition it is axiomatic to draw the following hypothesis: *Democratic governance has increased the contributions of town unions in the provision of basic education in rural communities in Ebonyi State.*

4. Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is cross-sectional survey design. This study was carried out in twelve selected communities from the six Local Government Areas chosen from the three senatorial zones. These communities comprised Amagu and Enyibichiri communities in Ikwo Local Government Area and Umuezeokoha and Eka communities in Ezza North Local Government Area located in Ebonyi Central Senatorial District. Others are: Igbeagu and Ezza-Inyimagu communalities in Izzi LGA, Umuogodo Akpu and Umuezeaka communities in Ohaukwu LGA in Ebonyi North Senatorial District while in Ebonyi South Senatorial District, Ugwulangwu and Okposi Ukwu communities in Ohaozara LGA and Owutu Edda and Nguzu Edda communities in Afikpo South LGA.

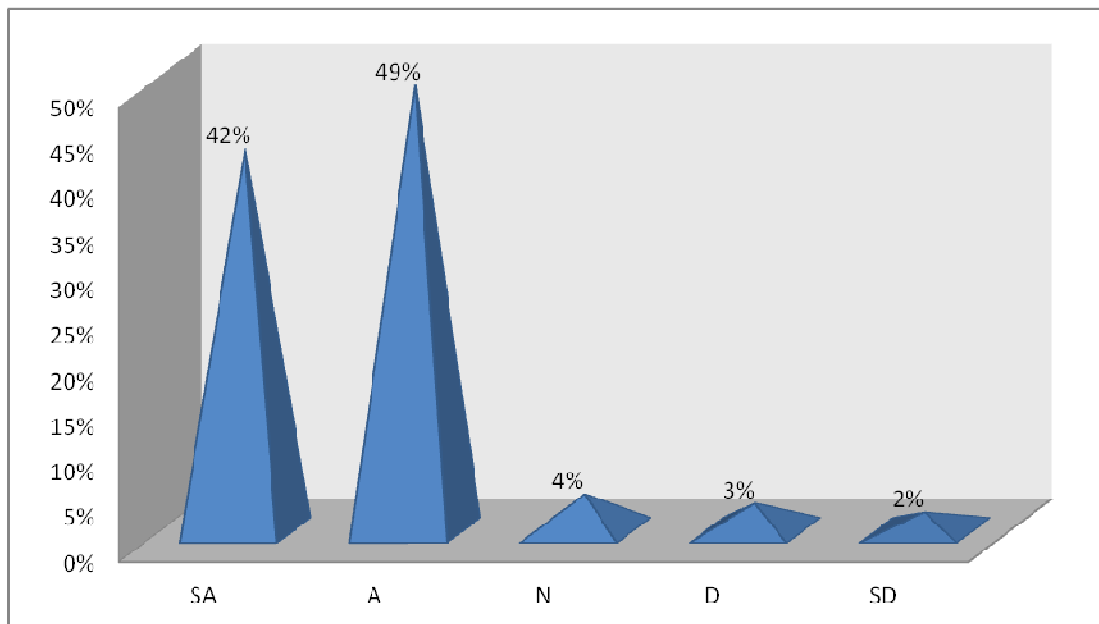
A population of four hundred and twenty two thousand four hundred and forty two (422,442) participated in the study. The participants were selected from religious leaders, women leaders, public office holders/civil servants, youths/students, community/town union leaders past and present from the selected communities. It is imperative to note that the study employed multistage sampling procedure.

The data for study were sourced through the use of the following research instruments, namely; questionnaire, observation, and focus group discussions while other sets data were obtained from the internet, text books, journals, newspapers, and magazines. The statistics instrument used for the analysis and presentation of data were simple percentage frequency tables and histogram while chi-square was used for the test of hypothesis.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

This section deals with the analysis and presentation of the sampled respondents' views on the major theme of the subject under study. The data were generated in line with the research questions and results presented in figures 1-5

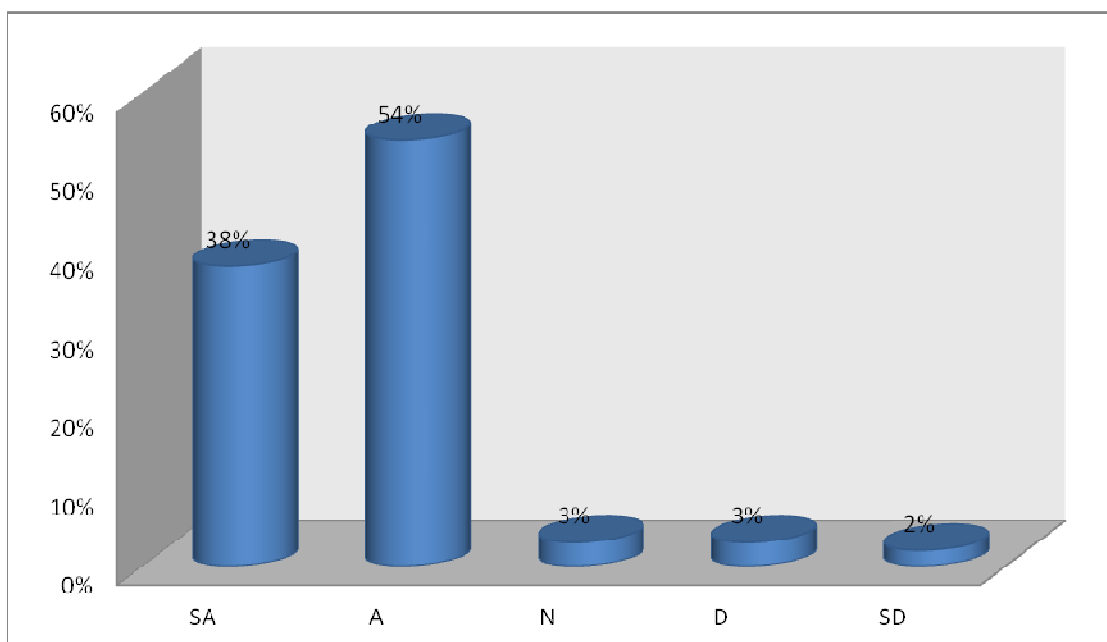
Figure 1: Histogram on how democratic governance has fast tracked the involvement of community members in the construction of new rural roads by the town union



Source: Humphrey Nwobashi and Itumo Anthony’s Field survey, 2016

Figure 1 shows the opinion of the sampled respondents’ answers questionnaire item 1. The following responses were obtained: strongly agreed 42.0% accounting for 609 respondents, agreed 49.0% representing 711 respondents, neutral 4.0% accounting for 58 sampled respondents, disagreed 3.0% representing 44 respondents and strongly disagreed 2% accounting for 29 sampled respondents. This means that democratic governance has fast tracked the involvement of community members by the town unions in the construction and maintenance of new rural feeder roads in their communities.

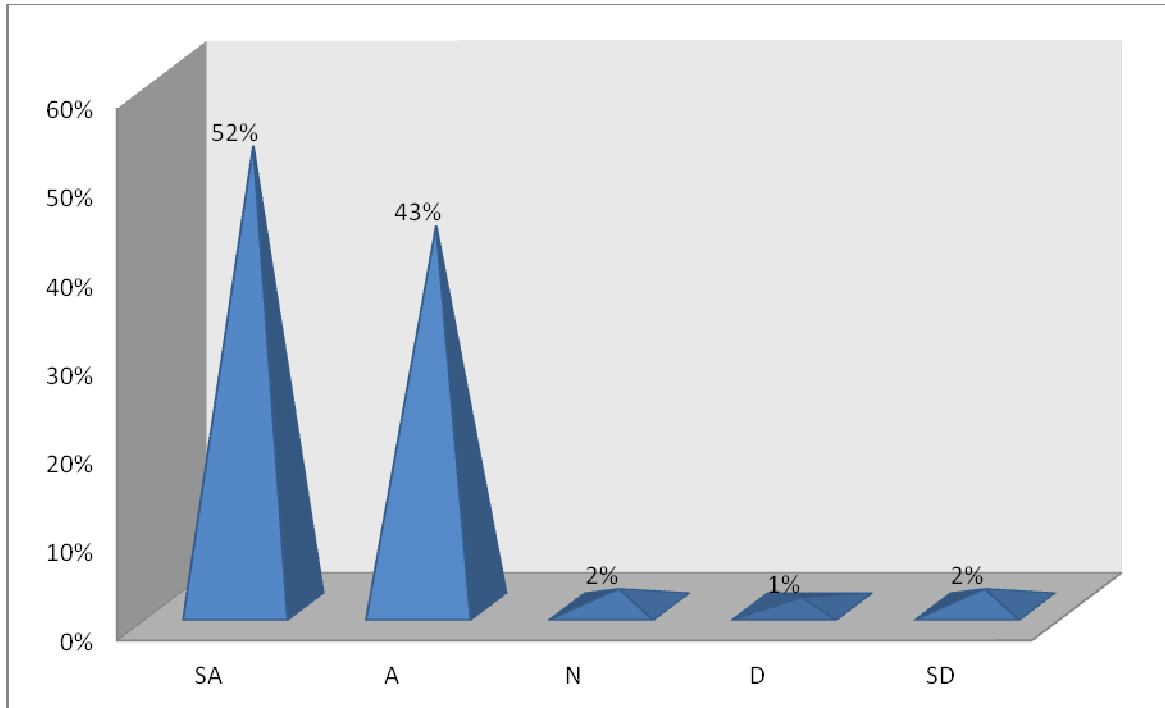
Figure 2: Histogram on how democratic governance has rekindled the interest of the rural people to collaborate with the town unions in construction and repair of bridges and culverts



Source: Humphrey Nwobashi and Itumo Anthony’s Field survey, 2016

The data in figure 2 shows the distribution of the sampled respondents on questionnaire item 2. The responses indicated the followings: strongly agreed 38.0% representing 551 of the sampled respondent, agreed 54.0% accounting for 783 respondents, 3.0% accounting for 44 respondents indicated neutral and disagreed respectively and strongly disagreed 2.0% representing 29 of the sampled respondents. This analysis showed that larger proportion of the sampled respondents accepted that democratic governance has rekindled the interest of the rural people to collaborate with the town unions in the construction and repair of bridges and culverts in communities of Ebonyi State.

Figure 3: Histogram on how democratic governance has motivated town unions to engage rural people in the construction and cleaning of drainages



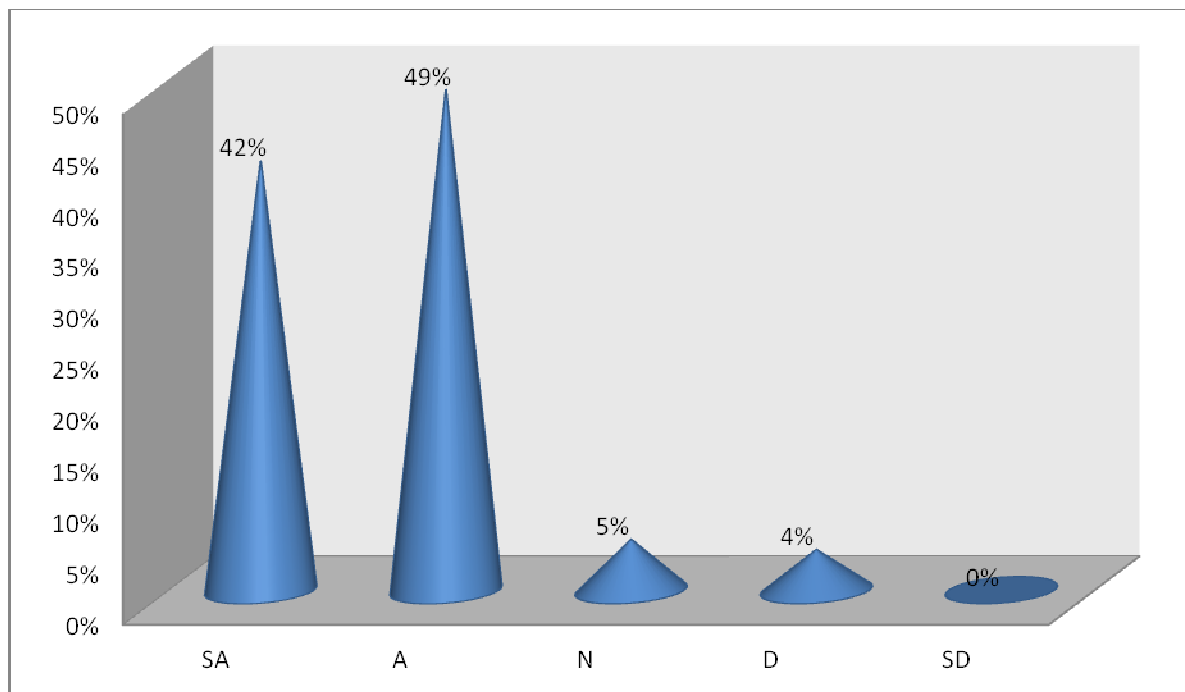
Source: Humphrey Nwobashi and Itumo Anthony’s Field survey, 2016

The analysis in figure 3 shows that 52.0% representing 754 of the sampled respondents strongly agreed, 43.0% accounting for 624 of them agreed, 2.0% accounting for 29 respondents indicated neutral, 1.0% representing 15 respondents of them disagreed and 2.0% accounting for 29 respondents strongly disagreed on questionnaire item 3. This means that democratic governance has motivated town unions to engage rural people in the construction and cleaning of drainages in the study area.

From the result in the figure 4, the following responses of the sampled respondents were obtained: 42.0% representing 609 respondents strongly agreed, 49.0% accounting for 711 respondents agreed, 5% representing 73 respondents indicated neutral and 4.0% accounting for 58 respondents disagreed on questionnaire item 4. This implied that the respondents accepted that under democratic dispensation, town unions have created awareness and involved community members in the clearing of rural roads in rural communities of Ebonyi State.

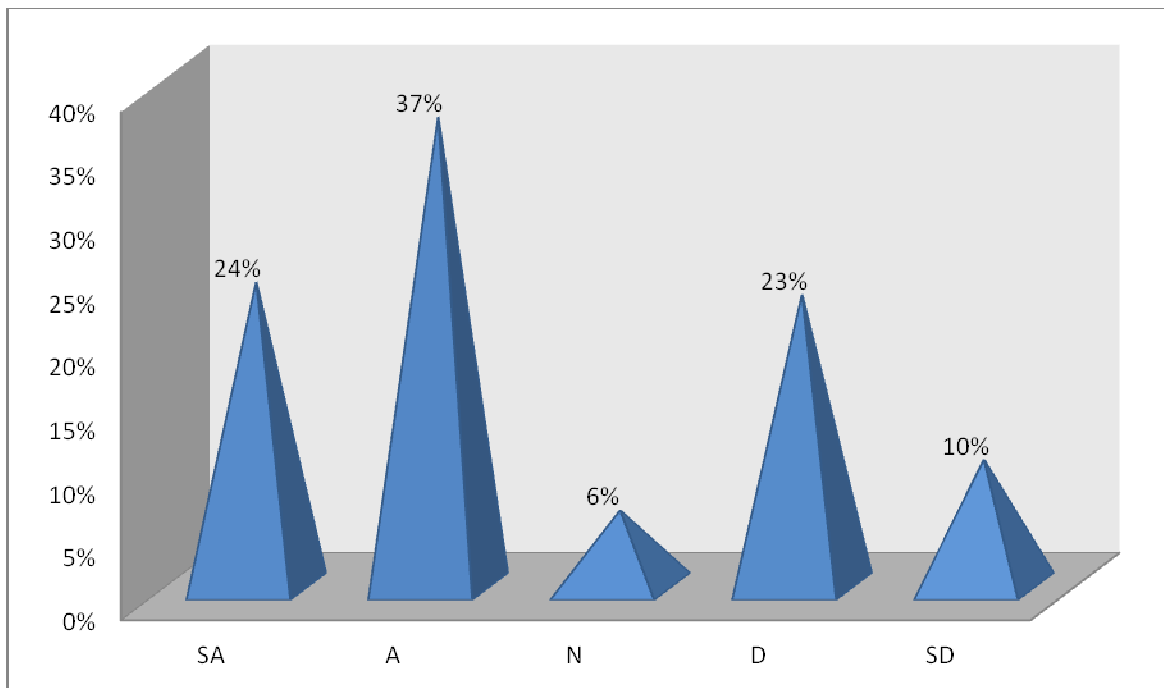
The result of the analysis in figure 5 below shows that 24.0% representing 348 of the respondents strongly agreed, and 37.0% accounting for 537 of them agreed 6.0% representing 87 of them were neutral, 23.0% accounting for 334 of them disagreed and 10.0% representing 145 of them strongly disagreed on questionnaire item 5. This indicated that the enthronement of democratic governance has facilitated town unions’ mobilization of community members to participation in filling-in of potholes and grading of rural roads in rural areas of Ebonyi State.

Figure 4: Histogram on how town unions have created awareness and involvement of community members in the clearing of rural roads under democratic dispensation



Source: Humphrey Nwobashi and Itumo Anthony's Field survey, 2016

Figure 5: Histogram on how enthronement of democratic governance has facilitated the participation of community members in filling-in of potholes and grading of rural roads by town unions



Source: Humphrey Nwobashi and Itumo Anthony's Field survey, 2016

6. Test of Hypothesis

The hypothesis tested in this study reads as follows:

H_{A1}: The enthronement of democratic governance has enhanced the contributions of town unions in the construction and maintenance of feeder roads in rural communities in Ebonyi State.

Table 1: Chi-Square Test on How Enthronement of Democratic governance Enhanced Town Unions' Contributions to the Construction of Rural Roads in Ebonyi State

S/N	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
11	609 574.2	711 673.2	58 58.2	44 99	29 46.4	1451
12	551 574.2	783 673.2	44 58.2	44 99	29 46.4	1451
13	754 574.2	624 673.2	29 58.2	15 99	29 46.4	1451
14	609 574.2	711 673.2	73 58.2	58 99	0 46.4	1451
15	348 574.2	537 673.2	87 58.2	334 99	145 46.4	1451
Total	2871	3366	291	495	232	7,255

Source: Field Survey Data, 2016

$$\text{Chi-Sq} = 2.11 + 2.12 + 0.01 + 30.56 + 6.53 + 0.94 + 17.91 + 3.46 + 30.56 + 6.53 + 56.3 + 3.60 + 14.65 + 16.98 + 6.53 + 2.11 + 2.12 + 3.76 + 16.98 + 46.4 + 89.11 + 27.56 + 14.25 + 557.83 + 209.53 = 1168.44$$

$$X^2\text{-cal} = 1168.44$$

$$\text{DF} = 16, \text{P-Value} = 0.05$$

$$X^2\text{-tab} = 2.0053$$

Decision: Reject null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis

The result in Table 1 above shows that the Chi-square calculated value was 1168.44, which is greater than the critical value of 2.0053 at an alpha level of 0.05. Based on the decision rule, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate accepted that the enthronement of democratic governance has significantly enhanced the participation of town unions in the construction of feeder roads in rural communities in Ebonyi State.

7. Discussion

The existence of good rural road network is a panacea for rapid socio-economic development of the rural communities in Nigeria. When there are deplorable roads, the transportation of people and evacuations of agricultural produce from rural to urban areas and movement of goods, fertilizer etc from urban to rural areas to ease commerce, entrepreneurial activities and agricultural production suffer serious setbacks. Against this backdrop, the town unions are expected to provide and maintain the rural roads to ensure quick and easy access and the movement of goods and people from within and across the rural communities and from the rural communities to urban areas. The dominant argument in the literature is that there is a positive correlation between democratic governance and the contribution of town unions to rural development. In other words, democratic governance has the magic wand stimulate an environment that could fast tract the contributions of town unions to rural development.

To test this assertion, the researchers carried out a survey of some communities in Ebobnyi state. The study was conducted in twelve rural communities across the three senatorial zones in the

State. The results of the study revealed that democratic governance enhanced the development of rural communities in Ebonyi State. The test of the research hypothesis showed strong statistically significant support for the alternative hypothesis. This means that the enthronement of democratic governance in Nigeria has enhanced the contributions of town unions to the provision of feeder roads in some rural communities in Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

The finding is in line with the study of Agboola, Ifesanya and Akanmu (2012) which examined the contributions of town unions to the provision of rural roads projects in rural communities in Akinyele and Kajola LGAs of Oyo State, Nigeria. Their study revealed that town unions in Kajola LGA undertaken more of roads rehabilitation project between 1996 and 2011. It concluded that the town unions made some significant contributions in the rehabilitation of rural roads in Oyo State within the period under review.

The situation is same in rural communities in Ebonyi State, Nigeria where town unions provided and maintained feeder roads in rural communities. The data revealed apparently that democratic governance has increased involvement of community members in the construction of new rural roads by town unions in the rural communities surveyed for the study. The people oriented nature of democratic governance made it possible for increased interaction between the community members and the town unions' executive. This invariably re-kindled the interest of the community members in participation in compulsory labour used for clearing, repairing and filling-up of potholes in the rural roads.

In addition to that, democratic governance rekindled the interest of the rural people to collaborate with the town unions in the construction and maintenance of bridges and culverts in the communities in Ebonyi State. The result also showed that there were evidences of increased involvement of the rural people in policy decisions making and implementation through the town hall meetings. Through this medium, the rural people are given the opportunity to contribute to decision making, as such many of them were encouraged to partner the town unions in the development of rural roads.

This agrees with Onyeozu's study which examined the contributions town unions to the development of social amenities in Rivers State, Nigeria (Onyeozu, 2010). Study revealed that town unions in Rivers State contributed significantly to the building and renovation of community roads. This also agrees with Ugwu (2013) which studied the contributions of town unions to provision social amenities such as roads in rural communities in Nsukka L.G.A. of Enugu State, Nigeria. The study revealed that town unions in Nsukka LGA embarked on road rehabilitation covering total 46.5 kilometers roads in 2010. The survey also indicated that majority (81%) of the respondents agreed that town unions contributed positively to rehabilitation of roads in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu.

Furthermore, democratic governance motivated the town unions in Ebonyi State to engage the rural people in the construction and cleaning of drainages in their rural communities. Since the inception of democratic governance in 1999, the participation of rural people in the construction and cleaning of drainages have received accelerated attention across rural communities in Ebonyi State.

Democratic governance has also increase the levels of awareness and involvement of community members in the cleaning of rural roads in Ebonyi State. The town unions from time to time organize clean-up exercises across the rural roads in Ebonyi State. The participations of age grades and some youth volunteer groups increased tremendously under the present democratic dispensation in Ebonyi State. Furthermore, democratic governance has facilitated the participation of community members in the filling-up of potholes and grading of rural roads in communities in Ebonyi State as indicated by the chi-square analysis of the questionnaire data. The town unions under democratic dispensation recorded regular participation of community members in direct labour organized by the town unions across the communities.

8. Conclusion

Democratic governance in Nigeria has led to increased contributions of town unions to construct and maintain rural development in some communities in Ebonyi State. This was made possible through increased collaboration between the town unions and members of the communities in the initiation, planning, funding, execution and maintaining of rural development projects and programmes. The people oriented nature of democratic governance has brought the town unions executive closer than ever to the people and as such increased the synergy between the people and members of the town unions in many rural communities in execution of developmental projects. Following this positive development, the number of projects and programmes executed under the democratic dispensation has increased remarkably.

This is evident in the areas of infrastructural development especially in the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and culverts. The people in the rural communities are now seen as partners in progress in the provision of rural development projects in many rural communities of Ebonyi State. However, town union executives failed to operate with committees on education, works and health which run count to the democratic principle of delegation of authority, thereby affecting the town unions' capacity to maximally be accountable to the people. Moreso, town unions have failed to improve provision of roads in rural communities in Ebonyi State due to the prevalence of partisan interests, clientele patronage, beneficiary interests, political differences and political intolerance among town union executives in running the affairs of the rural communities in the State.

Despite these modest efforts made by the town unions in rural development in Ebonyi State, they are still constrained by some factors such as lack of funds due to high prevalence of poverty in many rural communities, illiteracy that pervades the ranks and files of town union executives and undue interference from political office holders in the affairs of town unions. Worse still, lack of regular trainings and retraining of the town executives have put limitations on the town unions' capacities to function effectively in line with global best practices. The study argues these challenges could be overcome if the government provides subventions to town unions to fund rural development projects and complement the local resources in the execution of rural development projects and programmes while empowerment and poverty reduction programmes should be channeled through town unions.

Again, there should be regular seminar, workshops and symposia to increase the skills and knowledge required for effective and efficient smooth operations of town unions. Besides, there should be legislation mandating town executives to possess a minimum academic qualification of SSCE and there should be re-orientation of the rural people and their leaders to imbibe the culture of placing community interest above party interest in order to accelerate the contribution of town unions to the development in rural communities in Ebonyi State.

9. Recommendations

Based on the above findings the study made the following recommendations:

- (1) Government should provide periodic subvention to town unions to enable them have adequate fund for executing for the construction and maintenance of rural roads to the evacuation of agricultural products and movement of rural dwellers across the state.
- (2) Government should ensure that empowerment programmes such as agricultural and entrepreneurial loans are made accessible to the rural people in order to reduce the high incidence of poverty and improve the economy of rural communities.
- (3) Leadership trainings and enlightenment programmes should be organized on regular bases for the town unions to equip and enlighten them on the leadership skills that meet the best global acceptable practices on rural development.
- (4) There should be a legislation requiring members of town unions executive to possess a minimum academic qualification of senior secondary school certificate to equip them with

knowledge that could enable them arrest contemporary developmental challenges in the rural areas.

- (5) There should be re-orientation of the rural people and their leaders to imbibe the culture of placing community interest above party interest.
- (6) There should be regular town hall meetings between the community members, town unions' executives, traditional rulers and representatives of government to ensure that town unions employ democratic principles in administering their day to day affairs.
- (7) The government and civil society organizations should institute annual merit awards to best performing town unions in rural development to serve as moral booster and further encourage healthy competition among the town unions.

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