

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF UVWIE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF DELTA STATE (2015-2020)

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the impact of local government on grassroots development in Uvwie local government Area of Delta state. The study explores whether basic social amenities are in place and if there are major achievements in the agricultural sector in the study area. The critical role of local governments in leading development projects that have a direct impact on communities at the grassroots' level cannot be overemphasized, the ability of local governments to create a platform for contact and involvement between the federal/state government and residents in the community is one of the most important part of their establishment. The modernization theory was adopted for the study which posits that as societies modernize, advancements in technology and institutional changes, drive improvements in basic social amenities and agricultural productivity, shaping overall socio-economic development. The descriptive research design method was adopted in gathering data. Accordingly, findings from the study reveal that Infrastructure deficiencies, notably unreliable water supply and other challenges all pose significant barriers to economic progress and modernization. Despite these challenges, Policies supporting agriculture, such as improving market access and facilitating financial resources, show promise but require scaling to enhance impact. Recommendations include prioritizing infrastructure upgrades, expanding agricultural support, strengthening healthcare and education services, implementing rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to optimize development efforts and improve residents' quality of life.

Keywords: *Development, Grass root, Government, Public Administration, Impact.*

Introduction

Local governments play a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of communities worldwide. Their influence on grassroots development is particularly

significant, as they are often the closest administrative bodies to the people, directly impacting their daily lives and wellbeing. In the Nigerian context, local governments are expected to serve as catalysts for grassroots development by implementing policies and

projects that address the needs of their constituents. According to Okafor and Nweke (2018), Local governments are the bedrock of grassroots development in Nigeria, tasked with the responsibility of delivering essential services and fostering community development. This statement highlights the critical role of local governments in leading development projects that have a direct impact on communities at the local level. Nonetheless, local governments' ability to meet this commitment may vary significantly depending on factors such as governance systems, fiscal autonomy, and capacity building (Ibrahim, 2020). Regardless of the style of government, local government has long been regarded as the method of achieving and maintaining national cohesiveness, administration, and growth (Egonwan 2014).

In Nigeria's sociopolitical landscape, which is characterized by a variety of cultures, languages, and diverse needs and resources, the importance of this organization in promoting essential national awareness, unity, and a certain level of consistency, while also preserving unique diversities, cannot be underestimated (Forman and Godwin, 2014). The ability of local governments to create a platform for contact and involvement between the government and residents is an important part of their establishment. This allows for the timely settlement or dissolution of issues that may have produced stress within the system. Local government has been viewed as a solution to the myriad problems encountered by a people of diverse backgrounds and

cultural traditions. Despite the importance of this level of government, there have been challenges to its performance and activities in recent years. These challenges include political intrusion from higher levels of government, such as the federal and state governments, as well as difficulties such as bribery, corruption, embezzlement, and a scarcity of appropriately qualified and capable people (Agbakoba & Ogbonna 2004).

Statement of Problem

The foundation of local government is necessitated by the need to promote equitable development, maximize citizen participation, and increase government responsiveness. Local government serves as a political and administrative structure that promotes decentralization, national integration, effective governance, and a sense of community at the local level. The local government is a well-accepted administrative body (Agagu, 2014). Local governments have played an important role in promoting growth by connecting with the people, which is a major element of democracy. As a result, the local government is usually seen as an active player in rural development, working together with both state and federal governments to advance rural regions. The local government was established to supplement the efforts of the national and state governments in rural development, acknowledging the roles that the government must play in the advancement of any society and the obvious limitations of the national and state governments in addressing the needs of rural areas as many rural communities remain impoverished and underdeveloped. The purpose of this study is to look at the impact of local government on rural/grassroots development, with a

particular focus on Uvwie Local Government in Delta State.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Uvwie local government council in promoting rural development. The study aims to achieve the following particular objectives:

1. To ascertain whether basic social amenities such as healthcare facilities, good roads, education, reliable water supply etc. are in place in Uvwie Local Government
2. To find out if there are major achievements in the agricultural sector of Uvwie local government Area

Theoretical Framework

The theory of modernization suggests that civilizations progress through predetermined phases of development, propelled by technical progress, industry, urbanization, and transformations in social institutions. It suggests that as societies modernize, they undergo transformations in economic structure, governance, and social norms, leading to improvements in various aspects of life, including the provision of basic social amenities and advancements in agriculture.

Basic Assumptions of the Theory

Basic Social Amenities: According to Modernization Theory, as societies progress from traditional to modern forms, there is an expected improvement in the availability and quality of basic social amenities such as healthcare, education, sanitation, and infrastructure. This occurs due to increased economic resources, technological

innovations, and improved governance systems that prioritize public welfare. The study would investigate whether these amenities are effectively provided and accessible to the population, reflecting the level of societal modernization and development.

Achievements in Agriculture: Modernization Theory highlights agriculture as a crucial sector in the development process. It suggests that modernization leads to the adoption of advanced agricultural techniques, mechanization, improved irrigation systems, and better crop varieties, resulting in increased productivity and food security. The study would assess whether there have been notable achievements in agricultural productivity and sustainability, reflecting the level of agricultural modernization within the studied community or region.

Economic Development: Central to Modernization Theory is the idea that economic growth and development are intertwined with social progress. Improved agricultural productivity not only enhances food security but also contributes to overall economic growth through increased incomes, employment opportunities, and market integration. The study would examine how advancements in agriculture contribute to broader economic development and societal well-being.

Methodology

The study employs a descriptive research design focusing on the principal officers and members of the Uvwie local government council from 15 communities within the area, 5 were selected using a simple random sampling technique namely: Ekpan, Effurun, Ugborikoko, Ugbomoro, and Ugboroke. A sample size of 180 respondents was chosen from a total population of 259,900.

Additionally, eight key informant interviews were conducted with department heads and the council Chairman. Data collection methods include both qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative (survey

questionnaires). Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used for quantitative data analysis, while content analysis was applied to interpret the qualitative data.

Results

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Variable options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	120	75%
	Female	40	25%
Marital Status	Married	110	68.8%
	Single	44	27.5%
	Widowed	6	3.7%
Age	25 – 35	33	18%
	36 – 45	100	56%
	46 – 55	25	14%
	56 – 65	17	4%
	66 – 75	5	3%
Total		180	100%

Source: field survey, 2023.

Table 1 offers information about the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. According to the data collected, more than half of the respondents (75.5%) are male. This is unrelated to the fact that agriculture has traditionally been regarded as a male-dominated industry in

many nations, with cultural norms dictating that males be largely responsible for farming and agricultural management. The majority of the responders (69%) are married. More than half of all responders (56%) were between the ages of 36 and 45. This is strongly linked to the fact that these

individuals within the age range have obtained practical skills that make them well-suited for farming and associated activities.

Table 1b: Socio-demographic characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Variable options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Religion	Christianity	135	71.9%
	Islam	5	3.1%
	Others	40	25%
Educational Qualification	Noformal education	0	0
	Primary School	50	28%
	SSCE	90	50%
	Ond/Nce	20	11%
	Hnd/Bsc	20	11%
Occupation	Civil service	0	0%
	Civil service and farming	22	12%
	Farming	44	24%
	Animal husbandry	34	19%
	Farming and Animal Husbandry	80	44%
	Total		180

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 1b includes information on the respondents' sociodemographic traits. Based on the data gathered, research findings indicated that the majority of respondents

(72%) professed Christianity as their religion; this is owing to the nature of the study location, where Christians constitute the majority of the population.

About half of the respondents (50%) have secondary qualification which is a result of the study area being rural in nature. A large chunk of the respondents are into animal husbandry and farming. This is related to the fact that the research is focused on agriculture

and development hence had selected its target population to match its purpose.

To Ascertain Whether Basic Social Amenities Are In Place in Uvwie Local Government

Table 2: How reliable is the water supply in different areas of Uvwie Local Government?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Reliable	36	20%
Unreliable	124	76%
Undecided	20	11%
Total	180	100%

Source: field survey, 2023

Table 2 discusses the public perception on the availability of Basic Social Amenities in Uvwie Local Government area. The studies found that majority of respondents (76%) perceive the water supply in their areas as unreliable. This suggests that a large portion of the population faces frequent disruptions, inconsistent availability, or other issues with their water supply. However, 20% of the respondents believe that the water supply in their respective areas is consistent and dependable. These respondents likely experience few disruptions or issues with their water supply. A smaller percentage of respondents (11%) are undecided about the reliability of the water supply. This group may not have a clear opinion due to varying

experiences, insufficient information, or other reasons. This information is supported by a key informant interview where a 46 year old interviewee had mentioned thus;

“Concerning the issue of water, I no de get water for my house. Even my neighbour too, we no de get water. Na only when government wan do campaign then them go start give us pump water otherwise nothing”

It can be deduced from the statement above that water supply in some areas of Uvwie local government is not reliable.

Table 3 **Has the Local Government Council provided stable electricity supply**

Options	No. Of respondents	Percentage
Yes	30	17%
NO	120	67%
Undecided	30	17%
TOTAL	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 3 presents responses to a question on whether there is stable electricity supply: categorizing respondents into three groups based on their answers: Yes, No, and Undecided. The majority of respondents (67%) answered "No", indicating disagreement or a negative response. In contrast, 17% responded "Yes", expressing agreement or a positive stance on the matter. Another 17% were undecided, implying they did not firmly agree or disagree with the question posed. This distribution suggests a significant divergence of opinions among the respondents, with a clear majority leaning towards a negative viewpoint, while a considerable minority

remains uncertain or neutral on the issue at hand.

Information gotten from the interview depicts otherwise as majority of the council members are of the view that there is electricity in the local government, in the words of one interviewee;

“Uvwie has light everywhere in fact in my house, I have forgotten that they used to take light. Just recently, we commissioned additional transformers for some areas.”

Table 4: What is the condition of the road network in Uvwie Local Government?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Good	80	44%
Fair	70	39%
Poor	30	17%
Total	180	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 4 shows that in Uvwie Local Government, the condition of the road network shows varying levels of maintenance. Approximately 44% of respondents reported the roads as being in good condition, indicating a satisfactory state of repair and usability. Another significant portion, around 39%, described the roads as fair, suggesting they may have some issues but are generally passable. However, a notable 17% rated the roads as poor, highlighting

significant concerns with maintenance and functionality. This information is in line with the response from the interviews. In the words of a 50 year old interviewee who mentioned thus;

“we have good roads in Uvwie, the government has really tried in that aspect, they have provided good roads and even good walkways for the people.”

Table 5: What healthcare facilities are available within Uvwie Local Government

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Comprehensive hospitals	8	4%
Health centres	90	50%
Clinics	80	44%

specialist clinics	2	1%
TOTAL	180	100%

Source: field survey 2023

From table 5, it can be deduced that within Uvwie Local Government, healthcare facilities are distributed across various levels. The majority, accounting for 50% of responses, are health centres, which serve as primary points of access for basic medical services. Clinics comprise 44% of the facilities, offering a range of specialized treatments and consultations. Comprehensive hospitals, constituting 4%, provide more extensive medical care and facilities. Specialist clinics make up the remaining 1%, catering to specific medical needs. This distribution underscores a diverse healthcare landscape in Uvwie, ensuring accessibility to different levels of care

within the local community. Information gotten from the interview tallies with the response above. Quoting a 50 year old interviewee had mentioned the following;

“we take the health of our people very seriously, white man talk say ‘health na wealth’, If our people dey healthy dem go fit work better and make money to take care of themselves and their family that’s why we make sure say all our health centres dey work well and I know say the people go agree with me on this topic,”

Table 6 Has the local government council provided functioning community schools?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	80	44%
No	90	50%
No response	10	6 %
Total	180	100%

Source: field survey 2023

Table 6 captures the survey on whether the local government council has provided functioning community

schools in Uvwie. Approximately 44% of respondents answered affirmatively, indicating that there are functioning community schools established by the

council. Conversely, a significant portion, accounting for 50% of respondents, indicated that such schools have not been provided. Additionally, 6% of respondents did not provide a response. These findings suggest a divide in perceptions regarding the local government's efforts in education provision, highlighting both successes and areas needing improvement in ensuring accessible and effective educational infrastructure within the community. This finding is in line with the information gotten from an interviewee states that;

“we used to have community schools but most of them are no longer functioning because of rural urban migration and lack of funds to keep the schools running besides if they post teachers to the rural area, they no dey like stay. Everybody wan stay for city, everybody wan stay warri”

To find out if there are major achievements in the agricultural sector of uvwie local government area

Table 7: What significant advancements or innovations have been introduced in agricultural technology in the past decade?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Improved irrigation system	10	5.5%
Better seeds	23	12.7%
New tools and equipment	54	30%
Organic fertilizers	22	12%
Training workshops	71	39%
Total	180	100%

Source: field study, 2023

Table 7 discloses the most prominent development, according to 39% of respondents, is the introduction of training workshops aimed at enhancing agricultural practices and skills among farmers. New tools and equipment follow closely behind, accounting for 30% of responses, indicating a substantial upgrade in agricultural machinery and implements. Better seeds, selected by 12.7% of respondents, have also made an impact by improving crop quality and yield. Organic fertilizers, noted by 12% of respondents, reflect a growing trend towards sustainable farming practices.

Lastly, improved irrigation systems, cited by 5.5% of respondents, underscore ongoing efforts to optimize water usage in agriculture. Most of the interviewees had conflicting opinions. A director in a ministry had mentioned thus:

“Our farmers have been enjoying improved seedlings for a while now. It has really seriously boasted their outputs agriculturally. We even gave them at a reduced rate which the option to pay in installments”

Another interviewee stated the following:

“Our government is not so concerned with agriculture; I say this from knowledge that it has not provided any form of support in terms of implement or machines to these farmers. The general complain is that no money and that the soil is not so good for planting hence they don’t want to invest. Food is very important to any community and the government must participate to help its people in this aspect”

Both statements show conflicting opinions on government support on the same matter.

Table 8: What impacts have government policies or subsidies had on the agricultural sector's growth and development?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Increased Access to Loans	60	33%
Research and Development Funding	23	13%
Subsidized Inputs	34	19%
Insurance Coverage	1	1%
Market Access Initiatives	62	34%
Total	180	100

Source: field survey, 2023

Table 8 indicates that government policies and subsidies have had varying impacts on the growth and development of the agricultural sector. The most cited impact, noted by 34% of respondents, is the facilitation of market access initiatives, which has likely improved farmers' ability to reach broader markets and increase profitability. Increased access to loans follows closely, with 33% of respondents highlighting its role in providing financial support crucial for investment and expansion. Subsidized inputs, accounting for 19% of responses, have also played a significant role in reducing production costs and making farming more financially viable. Research and development funding, selected by 13% of respondents, indicates ongoing efforts to innovate and improve agricultural practices. However, insurance coverage, mentioned by only 1% of respondents, suggests a potential area for growth in risk management support within the sector.

Discussion of Findings

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents provide valuable insights. A significant majority of the respondents were male, which aligns with the findings of Godwin & Foreman, (2014) that traditional perception of agriculture is seen as a male-dominated sector in many cultures, where men are typically viewed as primary figures responsible for farming and agricultural management. Most of the respondents (69%) are married. Additionally, a substantial portion of respondents fell within the age group of 36-45 years. This is synonymous with the findings of Asabe (2012) where it was discovered that individuals within this age bracket is often associated with individuals who have acquired practical skills and experience conducive to farming and related activities. The findings on religion show that there are 71% Christians and 29%

Muslims. The higher number of Christians goes further to reflect the nature of the local government area being a dominant Christian area. About half of the respondents (50%) have secondary qualification which is a result of the study area being rural in nature. This finding is in line with those of Ibok (2014) where it was discovered that majority of rural dwellers do not go past secondary school as much value is associated to farming in such areas. A large chunk of the respondents are into animal husbandry and farming. This is related to the fact that the research is focused on agriculture and development hence had selected its target population to match its purpose.

Information on availability of Basic Social Amenities in Uvwie Local Government area shows that majority of respondents (76%) perceive the water supply in their areas as unreliable. This suggests that a large portion of the population faces frequent disruptions, inconsistent availability, or other issues with their water supply. Findings by Abutudu, (2011) on rural development also led him to conclude that the water supply in villages are basically streams, rivers and wells hence there are no potable water to reduce health risks

Information on whether there is stable electricity supply shows that an overwhelming majority (67%) answered "No", indicating disagreement or a negative response. In the context of modernization theory, access to stable electricity supply is crucial as it reflects a foundational element of infrastructure development necessary for economic growth and social progress. The overwhelming majority (67%) of respondents indicating a lack of stable electricity supply suggests a significant barrier to achieving modernization goals in the surveyed area. According to modernization theory, consistent access to

electricity is not only a basic necessity for daily life but also essential for fostering industrialization, technological advancement, and overall societal development. The negative response underscores potential challenges such as inadequate infrastructure investment, regulatory barriers, or economic disparities that hinder progress towards modernization objectives. Addressing these issues becomes imperative for policymakers aiming to facilitate sustainable development and improve living standards in the region.

Information on the condition of the road network shows varying levels of maintenance. Approximately 44% of respondents reported the roads as being in good condition, indicating a satisfactory state of repair and usability. It was also realized from a study by Adisa, in 2014 that the low development in rural areas is not unconnected to some areas having bad or unmotorable roads that prevents the movement of goods into and from the area

It can be deduced that within Uvwie Local Government, healthcare facilities are distributed across various levels. The majority, accounting for 50% of responses, are health centres, which serve as primary points of access for basic medical services. This aligns with modernization theory's notion that advancing societies establish comprehensive healthcare networks to ensure widespread access to basic health services, thereby supporting both individual well-being and broader societal development goals. It suggests a deliberate effort to build infrastructure that meets foundational needs crucial for advancing towards higher stages of development and improving overall quality of life within the local government area.

Information on whether the local government council has provided functioning community

schools in Uvwie. Approximately 44% of respondents answered affirmatively, indicating that there are functioning community schools established by the council. This information is contradictory to the one of Ibrahim, (2020) which emphasized lackadaisical attitude of government in the provision of healthcare facilities in rural areas. More so, it was disclosed the most prominent development, according to 39% of respondents, is the introduction of training workshops aimed at enhancing agricultural practices and skills among farmers.

Information on whether government policies and subsidies have had varying impacts on the growth and development of the agricultural sector. The most cited impact, noted by 34% of respondents, is the facilitation of market access initiatives, which has likely improved farmers' ability to reach broader markets and increase profitability. Increased access to loans follows closely, with 33% of respondents highlighting its role in providing financial support crucial for investment and expansion.

Conclusion

The socio-demographic profile of respondents in Uvwie Local Government Area reflects entrenched gender roles in agriculture, with a majority of male participants, aligning with broader cultural perceptions of farming as a male-dominated sector. This demographic composition, coupled with a significant proportion of respondents in the 36-45 age brackets who typically possess practical farming skills, underscores the community's reliance on traditional agricultural practices. Moreover, the prevalence of married respondents and the majority Christian population highlight local socio-cultural dynamics influencing community norms and values.

Infrastructure challenges further shape the local landscape, as evidenced by widespread perceptions of unreliable water and electricity supply, which are critical barriers to economic development and modernization. The reported condition of roads also varies, affecting access to markets and essential services. Despite these challenges, efforts by the local government are evident in the establishment of health centers and community schools, albeit with varying levels of success and perception among residents. Government policies aimed at supporting agriculture, such as facilitating market access and providing financial support, show promising impacts on sectorial growth, yet gaps remain in addressing broader socio-economic development needs effectively. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that integrate infrastructural development with targeted support for agriculture and community services, aiming to improve overall quality of life and foster sustainable development in the region.

Recommendations

1. To foster sustainable development in Uvwie Local Government Area, it is imperative to prioritize infrastructure enhancement, particularly by improving water supply, electricity stability, and road networks.
2. Concurrently, targeted support for agriculture should be expanded, including initiatives for market access, agricultural training, and access to financial resources.
3. Investment in healthcare and education infrastructure should be intensified to ensure accessible and quality services for all residents.
4. Community engagement efforts should focus on increasing awareness of government policies and

development initiatives, fostering transparency and local participation.

5. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of interventions will be crucial to assess impact, identify areas for improvement, and ensure resources are effectively utilized to achieve long-term socio-economic development goals

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