

**Town Union Governments and Community Development in Igboland: the Amakofia Ututu
Case, 1979-2015**

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Abstract: *The town union government has shown to be a major player in rural community development efforts in Igboland. Being a major element of change in the socio-political organisation of the people introduced by colonialism, town union government turned out to be a very important instrument of self-help approach to community development in post-colonial period, and by the end of the Nigeria-Biafra war, its effect became very visible. By 1979, the Amakofia Development Union (ADU) was formed. Its foundation accelerated community development in Amakofia Ututu community. However, like most town unions across Igboland, the developmental activities of the town union government have not received the academic attention it deserves. This study goes on to provide the basis for the self-help approach of town unions in Igboland. A major reason for the self-help approach adopted is the general negligence or ineptitude of governments at different levels. The study finds that the ADU, through broad-based source of funds has filled appreciable developmental gaps in Amakofia through the provisions of basic social and economic infrastructures and fostering of the traditional heritage of the community. The study employs the eclectic method of analysis by selecting the most relevant data from different sources for interpretation. The discourse is presented thematically.*

Keywords: Community, Development, Government, Self-help, Grassroots

Introduction

Communities in Igboland are known for their self-help efforts towards providing and maintaining basic infrastructural facilities for the development of the community. The self-help approach to community development across Igboland is of considerable antiquity and is an innate practice of the people over the years. It has been established that the average Igbo individual was basically community development conscious. This is due to the primordial communalism that existed in the society. The Igbo communalism is seen in the practice of

elaborate extended family system. The system has survived and sustained, and is still a strong socio-political organisation in Igboland, even after the shake-ups of colonialism. The community development efforts of the average Igbo man as embedded in his communalist nature is explicated by B.I. Owuamalam when he avers that in efforts towards community development, financial contributions by the majority of the people living in the rural areas in support of rural development projects have been increasing since the 1970s and early 1980s. Owuamalam goes on to point out that the Igbo in the diaspora had generally sent money home either in payment for their levies for the successful implementation of developmental projects or in payment for their less fortunate parents or other relations at home.¹ Of course, the foregoing is only possible because of the extended family system practiced in the south-eastern enclave over the years. Therefore, the cooperation received by the town union bodies towards community development could be linked to the Igbo communal spirit.

Amakofia, a village in the larger Ututu autonomous community located in Arochukwu Local Government Area of Abia State is not left out in self-help efforts towards community development. Through political and social organisations such as the kindred, Town Union, Age Grade, Village General Meeting, Tax Force, different women groups among others, Amakofia has been able to achieve a good measure of community development, especially since the 1970s. By 1970, the Nigeria-Biafra War had come to a halt but not without the very devastating effects of the war on Igboland, which was the main theatre of warfare. By implication, there became an urgent need to reconstruct the enclave. However, the burden of reconstruction and community development basically fell on the town union governments, as it appeared that the federal and regional governments were not adequately forthcoming with sincere execution of proposed reconstruction plan.²

Even though most Igbo communities had formed town union governments by the time Nigeria gained independence in 1960, some others had to wait till the 1970s when the benefits of such unions could no longer be underrated or overlooked.³ In addition to the efforts of the above mentioned organisations in the community, the town also collaborates with the State and Local Governments in ensuring that important infrastructures and basic amenities are adequately provided in the community. Government's efforts at developing the rural communities could be gleaned from the Integrated Rural Development Programme, which is also discussed in this study.⁴

Community development depicts the patriotic passion of the indigenous people of a community to enhance their livelihood. The United Nations defines community development as "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems".⁵ In Amakofia, there have been a number of times when the community members had to converge in emergency meetings to deal with one developmental challenge or the other. This is to show that the activities of community development do not only lie within the established organisations mentioned above. Nonetheless, community development efforts are basically seen through the activities of the town unions in the contemporary times. The politics of the town unions normally reflect on the developmental strides of the community. The Amakofia Development Union (ADU), which is the political organisation that pilots the developmental efforts in Amakofia, has had its share of ups and downs. The personality of the individuals at the helm of affairs always has a way of reflecting on the general performance of the town union government. There are other factors which either aid the stultification or enhancement of growth and development in Amakofia. These factors are explicated in this study.

Therefore, it is the aim of this work to appraise the developmental activities in Amakofia. The origin of the town union, functions and impacts will be accounted for in this study. Also the Federal, State and Local Governments developmental activities in the town will be explicated.

Literature Review

Authors and scholars of Nigerian origin have made various attempts to examine the variables that inform the process of community development. The attention on community development in Nigeria may be attributed to the developmental status of the country generally. In a situation where grassroots development seems to be receiving undesirable attention, and where per capita productivity in the rural areas is infinitesimal, observers and analysts tend to engage in academic enquiries.

Enyi John Egbe explicates the efforts of different governmental bodies at different levels towards the development of the rural areas in Nigeria. Egbe shows that the responsibility of rural development is not only with government at the grassroots level in Nigeria when he avers thus, "Nigeria gained independence in 1960 from the British colonial government. Ever since then, rural or community development has been declared a priority by the successive governments, be it civilian or military."⁶ In essence, the different tiers of government in the federation are expected to contribute to rural community development. Nonetheless, as N.G Akhimien *et al* observes, the federal government of the country has not lived up to the responsibility of rural community development.⁷

N.G Akhimien *et al* look at rural community development through economic activities when they posit thus "Rural development is a means of bringing about enduring changes in the structure of the rural sector in a manner that productivity and output are increased, the technology and techniques of production are radically revolutionized with enhanced standard of living".⁸ This description of rural development is not all-encompassing as it obviously involves the socio-political milieu of a society. An apt description of rural community development is rendered by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) as quoted in Akhimien *et al* thusly, "The outcome of a series of qualitative and quantitative changes occurring among rural population".⁹ In other words, rural community development does not involve only economic activities but ensures the general improvement in living conditions of the people.

An agency-based assessment of rural community development is made by L.E Udu and S.O Onwe. The duo assesses the activities of Ebonyi State Community Based Social Development Agency (EB-CSDA), particularly on poverty reduction in rural communities of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Udu and Onwe show the effects of agencies' partnership in community development of rural areas as they observe that the agency is rated high in the provision of micro-projects to the rural communities. Nonetheless, despite the efforts of the EB-CSDA, poverty remained a chronic scourge in the community studied. This may be attributed to group approach employed by the agency instead of targeting the individual poor.¹⁰

Paul Francis *et al* observe that community-based organisations are more efficient in grassroots community development than government programmes. The efficiency of community-based organisations such as traditional and kinship institutions, community associations, occupational associations, cooperatives, women's groups, immigrant welfare associations and religious organisations, is attributed by Francis *et al* to local decision-making and participation.¹¹ Empirical investigations have shown that government approaches to community development generally neglect local inputs and participation.

B.I. Ouwamalam explores the changing trends in community development in Eastern Nigeria. He avers that the colonial administration engaged in rural community development through the instrument of the Indirect Rule system.¹² He goes further to explicate how the newly introduced social institutions such as the churches and schools laid the foundation for modern patterns of community development.¹³ By independence, the government became effectively involved in assisting community development in the First Republic Eastern Nigeria. According to Ouwamalam, in Eastern Nigeria before the Nigeria-Biafra war i.e 1962-1967, government realized the need for assisting communities to attain their aspirations in implementing rural development projects.¹⁴ At the outbreak of the war, many charity organisations and aid bodies contributed towards community development in the region and largely continued in the immediate post-war years.

There are certain conclusions that the reviewed studies and even many others have in common. One of such is the fact that the Nigerian government has largely failed to bring development to rural communities in the country. The failure is mostly attributed to the sustained rot in the different levels of government since independence. It is equally noted that most of the literature ignore the contributions of town union governments towards rural community development. Such oversight is done regardless of the fact that most self-help approach in the absence of sincere government execution of rural development programmes, were initiated and executed by the town union bodies. The present study goes on to fill this gap in literature by adopting the Amakofia Development Union for detailed analysis.

Community Development Efforts in Amakofia Ututu Before 1979

Community development efforts in Amakofia dates back to the early 20th century. During this period the affairs in Amakofia were piloted by the age-grade (*ogba nabo*) which had its primary objectives, committing themselves to the enhancement of the people's security, welfare, rapid growth, cultural, social and political development in the community. Age grades (*ogba nabo*) were people born within a specific period of time, within three to five years. Some of the roles the age grades played in Amakofia before 1979 includes: ensuring the security of lives and property, enforcement of law and order, developers/executors of community initiatives and projects and crime control which was a growing area of need in Amakofia.¹⁵

Private individuals also contributed their quota to community development in Amakofia before 1979, individual efforts such as sinking of boreholes, clearing and expansion of pathways (roads) and donation of electricity transformers were done by wealthy and illustrious sons. These factors mentioned above helped in the improvement on the welfare of the people, electricity became available in Amakofia precisely in 1975 in some areas. Chief Kalu Nchege took it upon himself and donated a brand new transformers in Amakofia in 1977, electric poles and wires were also made available by members of the community for rural electrification, from St. Pauls Catholic junction Abuma to Amakofia village square. Pipe born water was also made available in the community, the people did not have to walk long distance to get water as water was already available in the towns and villages.¹⁶

The missionaries also played significant roles in Amakofia development before 1979. The Catholic Church was of immense help to the people, they spearheaded the rural electrification project than ran from Itu Cross River state down to Aro community into Amakofia. The Christian missionaries built churches and chapels that serve as a place of worship, these include people attending church services or visiting the church for private prayers. In the bid to carry out

community development, the Christian missionary, the Salvation Army a Christian denomination helped those who were suffering, at that time served as a food bank, it was a place where the people of Amakofia living in abject poverty could go and collect some food items to enable them feed their families.¹⁷ The poor went to the missionaries for aid which helped in their welfare and living condition.

Formation of Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U)

According to Kenneth little, the Igbos were the originators of welfare unions in Nigeria.¹⁸ A publication in 1964 by the Igbo state union had shown that during the 1920s the Igbos, resident outside their homeland originally formed family unions which later widened into village, town and district unions.¹⁹ This later developed into an organisation known as the Igbo Federated Union (IFU). The aim for forming these unions was to serve as a tool for social mobilization and development of rural communities. One may therefore infer that these organisations were created to solve the social and economic problems of the people who migrated to the urban centres. Although mutual aid was the primary function of all the unions, there were also wider interests. In addition to assisting their own members financially, many associations set out to improve their home towns and villages. The Amakofia people were not left out of this wave of welfare unions sweeping across Nigeria in the third quarter of the 20th century.

Consequently, in 1979 the Amakofia Development Union (ADU) was formed by some concerned indigenes of Amakofia, with branches in Lagos, Port Harcourt, Umuahia, Owerri, Aba, Enugu and other urban cities.²⁰ Most of the pioneer members and organizers were urban-based civil servants and business men who deemed it necessary to rally the people of Amakofia together for a meaningful development of the area.²¹ The Amakofia Development Union (ADU) was thus founded to foster unity and to enable the people of Amakofia tackle the problems in the area, to promote and uphold the customs and traditions of the people, and above all to foster the progress and development of the area. It is noteworthy that the emergence of the Amakofia Development Union (ADU) was necessitated by the prevailing needs to solve the developmental problems facing Amakofia Ututu. The Amakofia people were therefore forced to identify the limitations of the government in providing the resources which are needed for their development. They embarked on self-help development programmes and decided to find collective solution to their development problem. Active campaigns and sensitization programmes were pursued in Amakofia, making the people believe their advancement and development strategy lies very much in what they can do to improve their living standard. As a result of this, the Amakofia Development Union (ADU) launched different self-help projects with emphasis on educational development, provision of pipe-born water, rural electrification, promotion of peace and unity as well as building and grading new roads and feeder roads.²²

Those who played important role in the formation of Amakofia Development Union (ADU) were Dr. Chimyere Okorie, HRH Late Oyenmaechi Etum Nwankwo, Mr Okereke O., and Engr Amah Kalu, among others. In 1979, some elites of Amakofia drafted the maiden constitution of the union. This according to the union is significant because it serves as the year the union was formally inaugurated. Membership of the union is open to all eligible indigene of Amakofia, every member had to enrol with a nominal enrolment fee stipulated by the town council ward, and membership into the union was by birth, marriage, parental origin or by adoption.²³ Those who have resided in Amakofia for 10 years or above and who adopted Amakofia as their

hometown and accepted its cultural heritage are also eligible for membership, admission shall be through introduction by existing members.

Organisational Structure of Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U)

National Executive Officers of the Union

According to part IV section II of Amakofia Development Union (ADU) written constitution of 2012, the General congress of the union shall be administered by a national executive council, which shall be made up of the following officers:

- a. President General
- b. Vice President General
- c. Secretary General
- d. Assistant Secretary General
- e. Financial Secretary
- f. Assistant financial Secretary
- g. Treasurer
- h. Audit Chairman
- i. Publicity Secretary
- j. Joint Provost
- k. Chief welfare officer
- l. Chairman of all branch union.²⁴

The National Executive meets twice a year, ordinary meetings could be summoned when necessary. The meeting is to be summoned by the President General, in the meeting of the National Executives, two third of the members shall form a quorum and all decisions of the committee shall be valid, provided that three quarter of those present are in favour of the decision.

The Executive officers of the union are elected by an open ballot by raising of hands. The tenure of an officer shall expire after every four years. However, an officer's tenure in office may elapse before the four year term if he or she dies or is incapacitated. He could also be removed from office if found guilty of inefficiency or gross misconduct.²⁵

The President General presides over the executive and general meetings and such other meetings as may be called by the secretary and the public relation officer as directed by the president of the union. It is the duty of the President General to direct and conduct the affairs of the meetings and to maintain discipline. The duty of the Vice President was to assist the president in the performance of his duties at meetings, and to perform such duties as the president might direct. He vice President also assumed the duties of the President if the President was absent and presides over the meetings of the Executive committee of the Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U).

The Secretary General was the principal administrative officer of the union's secretariat. He was responsible to the executive committee. He recorded the proceedings of the meetings and submits his annual report to the executives of the Amakofia Development Union (ADU), after the approval of the executive committee. The Assistant Secretary helps the Secretary General in recording proceedings at meetings and it was his duty to read the minutes at meetings. He performed other duties as directed by the President General.²⁶

The Treasurer was responsible for the safe keeping of the union's money. He kept an accurate record of the union's finances. He was obligated to release money when demanded by the General congress on the endorsement of the President and the Financial Secretary. The financial secretary was responsible for keeping records of all the financial reports. He received money for the union by which he issued official stamped receipts, and transmitted such money to the treasurer, before expenses within 24 hours from the time the receipt of such money was issued. He also prepared payment vouchers and made periodic statements of account to the General congress.

There was also the audit committee which was responsible for checking all the cash books of the officers connected with the finances of the union and bringing to book any officer who failed to submit his cash booklet to the audit committee for inspection. Their duties included giving financial report of the union's funds at the annual convention or at any other time directed by the Executive committee.²⁷

The Publicity secretary was responsible for issuing press releases, bulletins and making public announcements on all aspects of the union's activities. The Joint Provost as the chief whip of the union maintain discipline in all the deliberations of the union on the direction of the President and was to call to order any disorderly person if so directed by the President. He collects approved fines from offenders and hands the proceeds over to the financial secretary. The Chairman of all branches communicates with those, both at home and abroad and gathers information and activities of the respective branches, he submits his reports to the General congress. The national executives study the report to know how each branch is fairing.

For the efficient running of the association, there is an annual general meeting which was the supreme authority of the union. The General congress is usually held on the 29th of December annually, commencing from 12:00 noon, at Amaeke town hall/civic centre. At this point different branches of the Amakofia Development Union (ADU) present reports on how they are faring.²⁸ Each branch union was represented by as many delegates as possible and voting was by raising of hands as the convention decided.

The Executive officers of the union, namely, the President General, the Vice President General, the Secretary General, the Assistant Secretary General, the Financial Secretary, the Assistant Financial Secretary, the Treasurer, the Audit Chairman, the Publicity Secretary and Joint Provost, four members appointed from any four branches abroad and eight members from the home branch constituted the Executive Committee of the Amakofia Development Union (ADU). The Executive committee had powers to formulate policy for consideration by the annual General congress of the union. It also coordinated the activities of the various branches of the union.

The Branches of the Union

According to part II section 4 of Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U) written constitution, "There shall be Amakofia town union branches at home, cities in Nigeria and in diaspora were Amakofia citizens are domiciled."²⁹ A branch of the union can be formed in an area where there are ten or more citizens of Amakofia resident outside Amakofia Ututu may form a branch of the union and notify the union's executives accordingly, each branch has to apply to the national executive made up of the chairman, vice chairman, secretary and assistant secretary etc. Each branch had the sole authority and responsibility to organise elections to choose their representative candidates. The aims and objectives of the branches shall be the same with that of

the General congress of Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U). The union branches participate in the formulation of policies, tendering of proposals and reports for the attention of the General congress. Programmes of the central executives presented to them during the General congress maybe rejected or ratified.³⁰ Their meeting is held annually on December 29th. The aims and objective of the branches shall be:

1. To foster brotherhood among members of the branch.
2. To provide links with Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U) for the purpose of knowing what is going on at home and in other branches.
3. To collect revenue from members and transmit it to the union as and when necessary.
4. To carry out any other instruction from the Development Union.
5. To increase membership and promote overall development.

Each branch is to register with the development union with particulars which includes:

- (i) Registration fee determined by the Executive committee
- (ii) List of all members and the contact address of their secretariat of the union branch
- (iii) The names of the Executives of each branch which must be up-dated at least every two years. The formation of the union branch is mandatory in any city where there are ten or more citizens living and working.

They are to make by-laws, rules and regulation guiding them while at the national level there should be a written constitution which prevails over any other one made by the union branches. Each branch is to make annual payment to the national body, and the amount to be paid is based on the strength of the members of the union branch as assessed by Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U) executives.

The union braches participate in the formulation of policies by submitting proposals and reports for the agenda of the General congress meeting and by ratifying or rejecting the programmes of the central executives presented by them at the General congress meeting, which is held annually on 29th December. Thus, there is an effective means of communication and proper flow of information as the President General tours from various branches in Nigeria on yearly basis while those abroad are toured on a special arrangement usually in two years.

Presently, Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U) has branches in many cities in Nigeria and in other countries such as Cameroon, Ghana, United States of America and the United Kingdom.³¹

Stated Aims and Objectives of Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U)

According to Prince Ezeugonna , the aims and objectives of the town unions are the development of their respective rural areas, they also aim at modernizing their home communities, elevate their status and foster self respect.³² The motto of the union is “Service and Progress”. Its lofty aims and objectives were summarised in its constitution. In view of this, the 2012 Amakofia Development Union (ADU) written constitution, part I Section II stated that aims and objectives of the union are as follows:

1. To act as a binding force in bringing together all sons and daughter of Amakofia both home and abroad as an indivisible unit.
2. To promote educational, economic, cultural and social progress in Amakofia
3. To protect and preserve the territorial integrity and security in Amakofia
4. To encourage development efforts of the various Youth Association and age grades system in Amakofia.

5. To seek better understanding with our neighboring town and villages work in harmony with the provision of the laws governing the country
6. To protect the image of Amakofia abroad
7. To assist organs of government in providing internal security for the town.
8. To promote develop and sustain the culture, customs and traditions of Amakofia.
9. To interact with the government with a view to attracting amenities and social infrastructures to Amakofia Ututu
10. To undertake community development projects in Amakofia.
11. To take any other legitimate measures that will conduce to peace, unity and progress of Amakofia Ututu.
12. To play advisory role on critical issues in the town
13. The union shall also have power of arbitration to adjudicate over a dispute or disruption among its members for the purpose of reconciliation and unity
14. To incorporate with the relevant organs of Local, State and Federal Government in all matters affecting the interest and integrity of the people of Amakofia and the federation of Nigeria.³³

The aims of the Amakofia Development Union (ADU) have not detracted significantly from its early motives which initially brought it into existence. More significantly is the fact that Amakofia Development Union (ADU) was more of a welfare union than a socio culturally oriented organisation. The desire to improve the living standard of the people necessitated the formation of the Amakofia Development Union (ADU). As at that time Amakofia was socially and economically backward, a far cry from our traditional heritage. The unity that was the bedrock of our people began to give way, attributed largely to the influence of western civilization. Others have also blamed it on our failure to learn from the lessons of history. Inter and Intra-group rivalries have often constituted the bane of co-operation and unity among the people.³⁴ It was this ugly situation that the Amakofia Development Union (ADU) endeavoured to end with the desire of establishing a more peaceful acceptable platform on which the people could unit.

Arthur Dunham in his Journal Article titled “Community Development Journal” outlined the aims and objectives of community development viz:

- (i) To improve the quality of individual, family and community life in areas with level of social action related to local needs, resources and aspirations.
- (ii) To increase the range of social and economic opportunities available to the people living in the community
- (iii) To increase individual community capacity, to create or take opportunities and make effective use of them
- (iv) To increase the capacity of individual and the community to exercise self-determination of their own lives and control over the condition and use of the environment.
- (v) To develop indigenous leadership.³⁵

Community development as could be deduced from the above is the process by which citizens of a community combine their human and material recourses to improve and progress the quality of development and span of life of the people in the community.

Assessment of Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U)

In this research work, it was observed that the Amakofia Development Union (ADU) laid more emphasis on the welfare of its members, developmental activities have been achieved on a rather narrow range of projects. According to Okeke Fabian Little emphasis has been placed on infrastructural development such as building of primary healthcare centres, road construction and rural electrification rather the union concentrated more in fostering peace, unity, love, mutual understanding, co-operation, social interaction and discipline among the populace of Amakofia.

Not much attention has been given by the union towards the improvement of Agricultural production. There is need to adequately train the local farmers on mechanized agriculture and the use of new techniques of farming, also rural farmers need to be provided with mechanized tools and farm implements such as Tractors, Planters, Trucks, Combined harvesters, Disk plough, Disk harrows, Ridgers, irrigation systems, fertilizers and pest control chemical at subsidized rates so as to enable peasants farmers increase their agricultural produce.³⁶

Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U) was faced with the problem of manpower in the implementation of some programmes and activities; this is as a result of rural-urban migration. According to Nweke Augustine, the rural-urban drift of youths in search for white collar jobs in the cities resulted in the shortage of the much needed able-bodied unskilled manpower to execute certain aspect of some projects such as the provision of water, sand and stone for construction work through direct labour. This in turn resulted in the execution of such aspect of the projects by contractors rather than direct labour of the members of the community. This in the other way round elevated the cost of the projects which have remained uncompleted.

On the issues of education, for instance some primary and secondary schools in Amakofia such as Akasi primary school Amakofia, Ututu central school II and Ohamja Community secondary school are not adequately maintained. As the community development union left alone cannot maintain them, the union usually call on the state and local government to come to the aid of these schools to reconstruct, renovate and re-equip them with classroom desk and lockers, textbooks and exercise books, updating the school library, writing material as well as laboratory equipments.³⁷

According to Mrs Nwankwo Nnennaya some executive members of the union do not reside within Amakofia Ututu and this made the task of project committee member more difficult. Project committee member found it difficult to meet, discuss, and procure the material necessary for the implementation of projects. As most executives of the union are resident in urban cities, it would become hard to lend people-oriented project. The problem of manpower has been one of the factors that hinder the effective execution of projects because only few members of the project committee were usually left to implement the project.

The Amakofia Development Union appears to be more of a welfare organisation, its objectives are to promote the general welfare of their members, the people of Amakofia in general, and the less privileged. The union has also promoted co-operation in the task of developing Amakofia Ututu. From the foregoing, the Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U) placed more emphasis on the welfare of its members, as the union had come to the aid of its members during periods of economic crisis.³⁸ Much has not been achieved in the areas of infrastructural development. But looking at the aims and objectives of the union as defined by their constitution one can assert that they have lived up to expectation.

Sources of Fund

Experience shows that no organisation can operate effectively without sufficient funds for its activities. This raises the question of the Amakofia Development Union (ADU) sources of fund. The union obtained funds from various sources. The union's sources of funds were generated from enrolment fees, registration fees, annual contributions, levies, donations, fines, raffle draws and other fund raising activities. The traditional means of raising funds was by levies which the union members imposed upon themselves. In the early years of the union, no allowance was made for a person's ability to pay.³⁹ A flat rate levy was the general practice. However, as time went on, a graded levy system was adopted. Under this arrangement, an individual's ability to pay levies was taken into consideration and the members were taxed accordingly.

The levy system of raising funds had no element of compulsion to it. Consequently, it was not always that members gracefully co-operated to pay their levies promptly. When a member failed to pay his or her levy as expected, the officials of the union would go to his or her residence to persuade him or her to pay up. An Appropriate levy structure was to be agreed upon by a simple majority of the union, members at the general meeting shall agree on the terms of payment.⁴⁰

Another source of generating funds was by donations from members. Although this method had been in use, it was not regarded as a major source of revenue because a member was under no obligation to make donations and if he was magnanimous enough to do so, any amount donated was accepted and applauded. However in the 21st century, the donation system was reorganised and popularised as very effective means of raising funds. The Amakofia Development Union (ADU) did this by launching their Magazines, Brochures, Almanacs and other development projects costing several thousands of naira, and challenging the members particularly the wealthier ones to show their love for their towns and villages by donating generously to ensure the success of the development projects at hand.⁴¹ Owing to its competitive character, the launching method of getting revenue had proven a very effective means of raising considerable sum of money for the Amakofia Development Union (ADU) since 1999. This is so because it created an easier means of making members of the union contribute large sums of money in cash or kind per head. The money an individual paid through this means were not levies and therefore involves no element of compulsion, members made their donations voluntarily.

There are other sources of fund, the registration of new members would cost the member a fee of Two thousand Naira only (₦2000). Members are required to pay a monthly due of ₦200 (Two hundred naira only). The Amakofia Development Union (ADU) imposed fines on erring members. If a member refuses to carry out an official instruction, he will be required to pay a fine ranging from five hundred Naira only (₦500) to five thousand Naira only (₦5000) depending on the gravity of the offence.⁴²

Men based at home pay less than those in the city, same is applicable to women. In the process of levy, each branch is expected to grade their members because they know their financial abilities. Another source of revenue was through the government intervention funding.

From the oral interviews carried out, it is clear that the Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U) has various ways of raising money for their developmental projects, and with good management, the union would continue to raise funds comfortably for their development programmes. After the money had been collected, there remained the question of safe keeping.

The treasurer was responsible for depositing all money collected from the financial secretary or his nominee, to the bank with-in 48 hours.⁴³

Educational Development

The modernization of a traditional society is not possible without the development of an adequate educational system.⁴⁴ This is because western education is looked upon as an important civilizing factor and therefore an essential instrument for social transformation. To this end, Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U) in 2009 renovated Akasi Primary School, Amakofia, in 2012 renovated Ututu Central School II. In 2014 one of the illustrious sons of Amakofia Mr Peter Nueman established a Private/Missionary school known as World Care Ministries Int'l School, Amakofia-Ohamja. The school is well equipped and has a conducive learning environment, a school bus is also available to convey students to and from school each day, World Care Ministries Int'l School is open to all natives of Ututu and their fees are highly subsidised. The renovation of both schools created a conducive learning environment for Amakofia citizens in their fatherland. The schools mentioned above were in dilapidated condition.⁴⁵ The union alongside Mr Batulomi Nwankwo in their contribution to nation building financed the reroofing and repainting of classroom blocks, blackboards were replaced with whiteboards, school signage were reconstructed, classroom desk and lockers were made available to students, also writing material (Textbooks and exercise) were donated to students by members the union.

Amakofia Development Union in an attempt at promoting education in the community instituted a scholarship scheme. Scholarship were given to outstanding students to study from Junior Secondary School One (JSS 1) down to Senior Secondary School Three (SS 3). These began during the regime of Mr Nze J. Ogbonnaya. With the desire to enhance academic discipline in Ututu central school II, the union built more classroom blocks in 2012 and later in 2013, Amakofia Development Union (Lagos branch) built a new structure which serves as a staffroom for school teachers including the principal and vice-principal office.⁴⁶

The National President of the union through this scheme has sponsored about twenty four indigenes of Amakofia with outstanding academic performance to acquire higher education in Nigerian Universities.⁴⁷ The scheme since its inception has rendered individual services to the sons and daughters of Amakofia that wish to further their studies but lacked sponsors.

Peace Making and Peace Building

Amakofia Development Union has contributed immensely in the integration of Ututu by generating effective mechanisms were citizens in diaspora closely relate with those at home. This is done by maintaining the link between the urban branches and those at home, the union therefore bridged the gap between Amakofia urban and rural dwellers. The union recognized the relevance of Amakofia Youth Association and age grade system to the political, social, cultural and economic life of Amakofia citizens and also supported the existence of age grades registered with the secretariat of the union, with the names of their excos and list of their members.⁴⁸ All citizens of Amakofia are encouraged by the union to belong to their respective age grade.

The union played significant role in conflict management and resolution, they provided peace and cohesion in the community. They joined hands with Ututu traditional institutions, *Ndi Nzena Ozo*, Igwe in council (*Ogo Ututu*), masquerade groups and others to ensure security of lives and

properties as well as peace and harmonious co-existence. The masquerade groups were charged with duties of community policing, they ensured the stability of law and order. Unnecessary civil cases such as quarrels, family feud, land dispute and boarder disputes were settled by the village Assembly (*Ndi Amala*). Nevertheless, development union executives and the Igwe in council remains the highest court of appeal in Amakofia. Amakofia Development Union has played a vital role in fostering peace and improving the standard of living of Amakofia people.

Promotion of Amakofia Cultural Heritage

The Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U) through its social and cultural programme exhibits some Igbo traditional cultures, like the *Afonta* Festival and *Usee* festival. The *Afonta* festival also known as *Izu* day is a period when people gather together and make sacrifice in honour of their past hero's, *Afonta* festival is open to every member of the community, men, women and children.⁴⁹ This festival usually comes up in May while *Usee* festival is open to only women in the community, they usually gather to remember virtues women of the past, it comes up June – August each year. The festival was widely recognised by the union to have the potential of delivering socio-cultural benefit to the community and also a vehicle to facilitate capacity building, self-determination, and cultural preservation. The development union provided quality program with an eye on revenue generation as they strived to promote and publicise community festivities. The festival usually attracts many from neighbouring villages far and near and also boosted community resources. The Amakofia Development Union supported and supervised special events such as Ututu beauty pageant which comes up on 1st January each year, masquerade festival, inter village wrestling competition usually between June- Augusts, inter village football completion in December, the new yam festival (*Iri ji*) which comes up annually in August/September and end of the year general return. The general return was one of the contributions of the town union as it provided an opportunity for the citizen of the community who live in different parts of the country and in diaspora to interact and unite together.

Amakofia Development Union annually, prepares calendar of events for the year activities. For instance, from 15th December down to 2nd January every year, no funeral ceremonies are carried out to enable the returnees stay in and participate fully in union activities. Also 28th December is celebrated as masquerade day, during this period masquerade of different types dance and parades the town in a peaceful manner and are not allowed to flog or harass anybody.⁵⁰ There is also codification of traditional marriage ceremony law as well as funeral ceremony laws. For instance, today in Amakofia funeral ceremonies do not last for more than days. This is a welcome development because in the past it has been very strenuous for the bereaved to organize ceremonies for their loved ones. The union is indeed the cement used to unite the people.

Conclusion

Embarking on community development is very important, considering the fact that more than two-third of the Nigeria's population is living in rural areas, and they experience a lot of misery, poverty, morbidity and under-development. It is clear that community participation in project development is an important element and a sure way to the speed up development of the rural areas in Nigeria.⁵¹ Hence, with the contributions of the town unions particularly Amakofia

Development Union (A.D.U), have become the focus of considerable attention in many communities as they are in the forefront of development activities.

Amakofia Development Union since its inception has served as a veritable instrument for human and material development in Amakofia Ututu. It is a very arduous task and demands a lot including money, time, co-operation and honesty. In Amakofia, the task of developing the area has been carried out by its citizens. The people of Amakofia Ututu have not relented in their efforts to develop the community through the organ called town union. They have not been deterred by huge levies they had to pay for execution of projects, rather it has to be subsidised by the wealthy citizens through official launchings.⁵²

According to Okechukwu Nwankwo the community can boast of a number of development projects achieved through community efforts. The sick and pregnant indigenes of Amakofia do not have to travel long distances to neighbouring towns and villages for treatment or delivery of their babies since the Primary healthcare centre Amakofia Ututu has been able to handle their medical needs. Doctors both at home and overseas now issue out drugs free of charge to citizens of Amakofia, diagnosis and check-up are also done at no cost. Children of school age do not need to walk long distances to attend primary and post primary school education since the schools in Amakofia have been renovated and equipped for their daily learning. Receptions and other formal or informal gatherings involving the community or its citizens are hosted conformably in the town hall/civic centre. There was also provision of water bore-hole and good network of feeder roads that connects Amakofia and her neighbours.⁵³

From this study, it is observed that there is no rigid partnership between local government officials and the Amakofia Development Union. The government's failures in the various community developments emanated from lack of national philosophical base, community participation and lack of cohesive identity, lack of planning and inability of the government to optimize local resources. In other words, the government at all level should encourage communities to partake fully in all issues concerning their development, morally, financially and otherwise. Community development depends largely on the existence of committed local leaders as well as the extent to which government encourage local planning and participation. Thus, the local government should provide an enabling environment for communities to initiate, plan and execute project that will be beneficial to them.

There should be the incorporation of more Youth into the Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U), if possible hold some major positions. Also, Amakofia and Ututu in general should donate acres of land for economic endeavour to the agricultural sector to generate revenue and empower the union and also boost food production in the area, if such venture is carried out, it would provide job opportunities for the unemployed Youths.

The union should device a means of checkmating the finances and expenditure in the offices of the Treasurer and Financial Secretary, in some cases grants given to the union and monies contributed by members of the community were misappropriated or could not be accounted for as such monies ended up in private pockets, the Amakofia Development Union (A.D.U) urgently needs to address such issues and device a means of meting out punishment to defaulters, the union should draw their general meetings as often as possible, at least three times a year to enable executive members discuss contentious issues bothering on development efforts in Amakofia . It is my profound belief that if all these measures are taken into consideration, the union shall gain more weight and substance to achieving its goal. The activities of the town union can only become success when there is transparency, accountability, and commitment of leaders and project officials in the bid to facilitate self-help in community development.

There are other facilities that need to be put in place in the community, to achieve these people of Amakofia Ututu must be willing to make sacrifices such as selfless services, humanitarian services and redemption of pledges. Moreover, the Abia State Government should remember that Ututu is part of the state and is a autonomous community in Arochukwu L.G.A. They should not only help in completing projects under construction, but also take up new ones on their own. If the government should do this the lives of the people in the community will improve tremendously and also in their level of development.

Endnotes

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