

IGBO DIASPORA AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTH EAST STATES OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper seeks to x-ray the role of diasporan Igbos in the economic development of the South East region of Nigeria. In the light of the dwindling economy of the country, especially in the areas of gross domestic product (GDP), per capita income, and basic infrastructural development, but indices in the South East have shown improvements in areas such as human capital development, level or standard of education in most of the states. It is difficult to situate the impetus and the drive for regional economic development in the government at the center, in which case such improvements could have been widespread across the country. But the effects of contributions from Igbo diasporans in the form of annual remittances from their places of abode, foreign financed community health care missions, educational scholarships, community-based self-help infrastructural developments, annual children school enrolment rate, and number of out of school children among others may have played key roles in the South East. Some of the questions that agitate the minds of scholars are thus; What are the motivating factors for the economic development efforts of diasporan Igbos? Has the activities of the Igbo diasporan community contributed to the economic development of the South East region of Nigeria? In what aspects of the South East economy has the diasporan Igbos played key roles? The study is anchored on the theory of citizenship. Documentary method of data collection will be employed which will rely on secondary data from books, journals, and official documents from government agencies. Also, content analysis will be relied upon in the study.

Keywords: Diaspora, Development, Economy, Igbo, State.

Introduction

The people known as the Igbos or the Igbo ethnic group are native and are predominantly found in southeastern part of Nigeria. They make up one of the largest population groups in the region, and are also one of the three largest in population in Nigeria itself. The Igbos naturally inhabit mainly the tropical rainforest of the country. They are bordered by some other ethnic groupings such as the Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw and others (Uchendu, 1965; Isichei, 1971). Over the years, especially after the civil war, there have been some narratives which tend to promote the notion that South East as presented after creation of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, is synonymous with Igboland. However, the southeast zone of Nigeria, and the Igboland are two different concepts. The southeast is a geopolitical zone created by the Nigerian government after the civil war to define the area (according to their thinking) where the Igbo ethnic nationality reside and predominate. However, Igboland refers to areas where Igbos are indigenous and are found in large numbers. Hence, the idea of southeast of Nigeria as the only zone where Igbos are found is erroneous and misleading. To support the argument further, it is pertinent to note that there are variant dialects of Igbos in Rivers state, Kogi state, Benue state, Delta state and even Edo state, though they are not in majority in these states. Igbos are even native to some areas in Equatorial Guinea and Sierra Leone. The land and place where Igbos are found are not what makes the places Igboland, some of the

characteristics that make Igbos what they are includes their language, culture, customs, norms, and above all the spirit of togetherness and collective achievement of goals. To buttress this point more, Agbo (1982, p.23) notes that “In fact, to be an Igbo man is to be identified with the tradition of the people and they live communal life and kinship commensality to the full. To be ostracized from the (Umunna) kinship is termed as almost being “dead” because it is the basis of every relationship. The collective good of the people both at home or in the diaspora remains the main goal of any Igbo gathering. No sane Igbo would like to be left behind or out of the kinship group, as this would surely portend being relegated to the background in activities of families, age grades, Umunna, social clubs and other gathering of the people. Agbo (1982, p.23) stresses that “for an Igbo man, his social, religious, political and economic life and status begins in his nuclear family, grows through the traditional structures of Umunna, to the village in their various groups, to the town and even outside the town”. It is evident that there is an intricate web of interrelations between every group where Igbos of both sexes gather to discuss and deliberate on matters of their common good. This very characteristic really assisted the Igbos a lot during the prosecution of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war. Many people who are not Igbos may wonder how the war effort was able to be prosecuted for as long as it was. The different town unions, the women groups, the youth and all other sections of the society were adequately carried along through the “Umunna” Kinsmen, “Umunwanyi” the Women, and “Ndi torobia” the youth groups. Stressing the importance of this aspect of the Igbo culture Agbo (1982, p.23) notes further that, “the Igbos were involved in one of the earliest African post-independence wars of secession (after the failed attempt of Katanga in the Congo), the Nigerian (Federalist) Biafra (secessionist) civil war (1966-1970). This was a historic moment that saw the Igbos unite to defend (albeit unsuccessfully) their perceived group interests”. The Igbos when compared to other ethnic groups in Nigeria, could be said to have harnessed the advantages of diasporic linkages which they have created with their homeland in order to bring about social and economic development back home.

Distance in most cases does not prevent Igbo groups from participating fully in social, political and economic happenings back in their home towns. In fact, distance actually becomes an impetus for active participation. Many villages, kindreds and towns were well fed during the time of covid 19 lockdown through remittances from abroad which were used to purchase food items such as rice, beans, yams, potatoes, cooking oil, salt, and dried fish for the consumption of people at home. Needy people in many villages in Igboland never lacked much. Officials of Igbo town unions abroad do relate with in order to be updated on events, also some retired persons who have relocated back home work as links between the leadership at home and those of their former place of abode (Osaghae, 1994). Igbos are also dexterous in arts and craft, they are energetic and result-oriented when it comes to what they do for a living. Some areas or zones of the Igboland were and are still renowned for one form of trade or craft. Hence, Uduku (2002) notes that the “Awka ironsmiths, Arochukwu 'medicine men' and possibly the Onitsha traders, to name a few exceptions whose distinctive professions were in demand in many parts of Igboland and elsewhere, were able to travel farther afield...”. They took these crafts and trade with them wherever they went. One can easily find Igbos plying their trade in Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroun, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, South Africa, and other parts of Europe and the Americas. Some people may wonder why Igbos are found in almost every part of the world, the reason is not only because they are business travellers and importers, but the Nigeria/Biafra civil war also contributed to their movement in large numbers.

The Igbos in large masses, especially after the Nigeria-Biafra civil war, ventured out of their southeast region in Nigeria into different parts of the world in search of better opportunities and greener pastures. Historically and by their characteristics, they retained their affinity and close connection with one another and the Igbo ancestral land through town development organizations, and age group gatherings. The link

with each other was and is still very strong that even in South Africa, Europe, North and South America, Igbos of different social standing identify with each other through these organizations and other cultural organizations and ceremonies like “Iri ji” the new yam festival. Nowadays, it is easy to find Igbo children who were born in America or Europe speaking and writing Igbo language fluently. This close affinity connects the Igbos socially and economically to the Igboland for development of the area. The Igbos practice their religion wherever they go which is predominantly, the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist missions. Elaborating on that, Areji (2022, p.9) notes that “Igbos are the most dominant among this (*the religious in Italy*) group. Others from some other states have more presence in some Pentecostal churches but Igbos dominate many of the communities to the point that in some they even say Masses in Igbo”.

The above-mentioned form the reasons why the Igbos have contributed immensely to the social and economic development of their communities back home in the South East of Nigeria. The study will focus on the motivating factors for economic development efforts of diasporan Igbos. Also, whether the activities of the Igbo diasporan community has contributed to the economic development of the South-East region of Nigeria. And finally, the aspects of the South East economy have where the diasporan Igbos have played key roles.

Conceptual Clarifications: Igbo Diaspora

Igbo diaspora refers to people of Igbo descent who do not reside in the Igbo motherland or native land. Many of them live in cities, towns and villages which are not in the South East region of Nigeria, while others live and transact their business in lands outside the shores of Nigeria. Some of these places are Western or Eastern Europe, other parts of Africa, in North or South America, South East Asia, and other lands. Records by such notable individuals as Olaudah Equiano shows that as early as the 1700s the Igbos have transported (either through slave trade or otherwise) from their native land to the new world. One of the oldest Igbo diaspora communities which was recorded was found in Liverpool, England in 1935 (Uka, 1992). While, Gugler (1961) cited in Uduku (2002, p.3) notes that;

the first instance of an Igbo Union in existence in Freetown in the late 19th century; this and subsequent Igbo communities were established by groups who felt affinity ties with southeastern Nigeria. Aside from these activities in this era there were also the autonomous actions of agents such as the Anglican CMS (Church Missionary Society) and the United Free Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), who sent chosen Africans (Igbos in this case) to theological colleges and medical schools in the UK (for example, Africanus Horton was the first black medical student in Edinburgh University).

Opportunities that were thrown up by independence and need for educated individuals to man many sensitive civil service positions, made Igbos to venture into the North and West for jobs. As they settled down in these areas, there is one thing that they never failed to do, and that was establishing a 'home town improvement' union which functions as rallying points for political issues both of the home town and the nation in general. This makes them distinct from other ethnic groups in Nigeria who may live outside their homeland. The Igbo diaspora community at some points do play the role of protector, organizer, and source of information to all members in times of need. Uduku (2002, p.3) notes that;

..Igbo community has often been able to organise itself effectively for evacuation or defence in times of conflict, this has been a useful strategy in towns in northern Nigeria where continuing ethnic and religious related conflicts remain.

After the return of Igbos at the end of the civil war, the roles of the diaspora communities in different

towns in Nigeria changed to more of economic guidance. On that note Uduku (2002, p.4) states that the diaspora communities "...focus(ed) in planned financial activities towards both individual house/building and also capital-intensive home town development projects in Igbo villages". The success of the Igbo diaspora in harnessing the energies of all Igbos both home and abroad to develop the homeland does not end there. It also spearheaded the quest for the rebuilding of the businesses and careers of the Igbos in the formal and informal small and medium scale businesses just few years after the civil which dispossessed them of whatever they had (Uduku, 2002). The indigenization policy of the Federal government shortly after the civil war, and the policy of £20 (Twenty pounds) flat for any amount of money owned by Igbos in the Nigerian banks prior to the war never slowed them down. Rather, it became the push which they needed to strive harder to overcome every social and economic obstacle on their way to economic emancipation. Today, the story is quite different as a World Bank (2000, p.171) notes that "In Nnewi for example, the Igbo community have established a motor parts industry that relies on ethnic ties to reduce transportation costs". This kind of mind frame has propelled the Igbos to a distinct level of development and achievement which is not compared to any other ethnic group or area in Nigeria. Recently, there has been a new impetus championed by the town unions and supported by the diasporan Igbos, especially in the aftermath of the 2023 general elections, for wealthy ones amongst them to direct their investments back to the East in order to forestall targeted economic discrimination in other parts of Nigeria.

Development

Generally speaking, development is one the essential characteristics of human society, every society of the world experience some form of development at one point or the other. The notion of development could be in the positive or negative sense. Just like other phenomena in social science, there is no consensus on what constitutes it for everyone. Scholars such as (Hahn-Been, 1970; Todaro, 1977; Sapru, 1994, and many others) have looked at development from different perspectives over the years.

The quest to guide states in Latin America, Asia, and Africa to post-independence economic stability after the Second World War made the study of development popular amongst scholars (Gaubu, 2003). Majorly, there are scholars of Western persuasion who see development as movement from traditional era to modernization era. Also, there are scholars of Eastern persuasion who through orthodox Marxism view development as a progression of modes of production from pre-capitalist stage to capitalist social formation, and then from there to socialist revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist era. However, development presents scholars with the opportunity to study every society's historical experience through their socio-cultural context (Mamdani, 2002).

While some viewed it from the transformational aspect, some others enumerated the factors that depict development in a polity without delving into the expected outcomes. Development could be seen as a multifaceted process which involves structural, institutional and attitudinal changes, and also poverty reduction, eradication of inequalities and general improved economic growth (Todaro, 1977). But for some scholars the above stated may not convey much meaning as long as there is a process of transformation from traditional setting to a modern setting. When a society moves from traditional and cultural stage in its existence, to a modernized stage which is achieved through social transformation, it could also be referred to as development. In this sense, therefore, there may not be much consideration for the ingredients which indicate real changes in the living standards and general conditions of the populace. Yet for some other scholars, development represents a process of acquiring sustained growth of a system's

capacity to cope with new continuous changes towards the achievement of progressive political, economic and societal objectives (Hahn-Been 1970). From the foregoing, it is clear that Hahn-Been is more concerned with the total change to the state of the peoples' social, economic, and political circumstance, without which, to him, development might not be said to have taken place.

There have been special and exceptional situations in the continent of Africa, some of which have been increase in aid, loans, technological introductions in the countries, but surprisingly many of these interventions have not had the kind of impact which are expected. Also, over the years spanning about six decades from the 1950s, there have been improvements in investment areas, inter-industry linkages, and capital in-flow, but there has not been commensurate reduction in the incidence of poverty or substantial improvements in the economic conditions of the poor and the less-privileged of the society. With the aforesaid situation, it would be wrong for one to assume that social and economic development has taken place. For Seers (1969), Dag Hammarskjold Foundation (1975) and Todaro (1977), humans are in the centrality of the notion of development. To them humans are both the beneficiaries or recipients, and also, the main participants in the quest for social and economic development in any community or society they find themselves.

Seers (1969) notes that development is the realization of the potential of human personality which necessitates substantial improvements in the eradication of poverty, unemployment and inequality in any society. Hence, for a country like Nigeria to lay claim to social and economic development, the levels of poverty must be brought to its barest minimum, the disparity between the low- and high-income earners must not be wide, and also, incidences of unemployment must be reduced. From the foregoing, the definition by Seers (1969) represents a clear deviation from the classical view of economic growth which concentrates its emphases on a country's income levels. In fact, the Seers view could be linked with the "Basic Needs Model" of development espoused by Khan (2003), the two are all most similar in their views about human development.

Also, Todaro (1977) emphasized the multi-dimensional process which involves major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of absolute poverty, without favoring any section of the society. The work further stressed that development must encompass the circle of change by which the entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within the system moves away from a condition perceived to be unsatisfactory toward a situation or condition of living regarded as maternally and spiritually conducive or "better". According to the work, there are three cardinal needs which are referred to as "good life" or values which individuals and society must pursue thus; life sustenance; self-esteem; and freedom from servitude. While Todaro proffered the above stated on social and economic development, he points out that the problem of underdevelopment and inequality is majorly structural in nature and are encouraged by existing institutions in the society that promotes rather than prevent inequality, inadequate distribution of wealth, hinders access to basic services, and the cause of deprivation thereby impeding the attainment of development. Finally, Todaro defines development as a holistic cultural, social and institutional transformation largely brought about by substantial changes in existing institutions into one that takes cognizance of the importance of the human person and thereby provides adequate services to support life-sustaining, basic human needs, promotes self-respect and dignity through the entire society and including the government's respect of lives and liberties of individuals and thereby changing the attitudes and culture of a mass of people, rendering them free and capable to live productive meaningful lives or what he referred to as the "good life". This is the main contention of the Todaro definition of development. Still on the notion of improving the lives of the

people, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation (1975) is also people centered and expressed the need to satisfy material and political needs of the people. Generally speaking, the work encompasses the search for society to overcome discrimination of any kind, these may be social, political sexual, ethnic or economic. Another dimension of the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation (DHF) definition is that it emphasizes sustainable utilization of existing natural resources for the benefit of the society, so that the society does not transgress the regenerative limits of the parent environment. From our definitions and conceptualizations, it is discernable that the Igbos of the south east of Nigeria do have a different perspective culturally as to what development in Nigeria as a country should be.

While people of other ethnic groups are so much interested in controlling the commonwealth of the state and utilize such for personal or group interest, but the Igbos believe in their natural ability to overcome any obstacle and achieve whatever personal or group interest which they may have.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of citizenship is applied to this work as we set out to ascertain the impact of Igbo diaspora and the economic development of the South-East states of Nigeria. Its implications on national integration of which may have been as a result of lack of national cohesion at the center. Studies that had focused on ethnicity such as Diamond (1988a), Rothchild (1968a), and Young (1976) had examined the relationship between postcolonial states and ethnic sub-nationalism. Ndegwa (1997) notes that “the citizenship lens provides a more precise way of theorizing the relationship between ethnic identity, authority, and legitimacy” which seem to explain the nationalistic grip of ethnic politics on nationals in their localized ethnic communities especially where and when there are no strong bonds that unite and galvanize them to national integration.

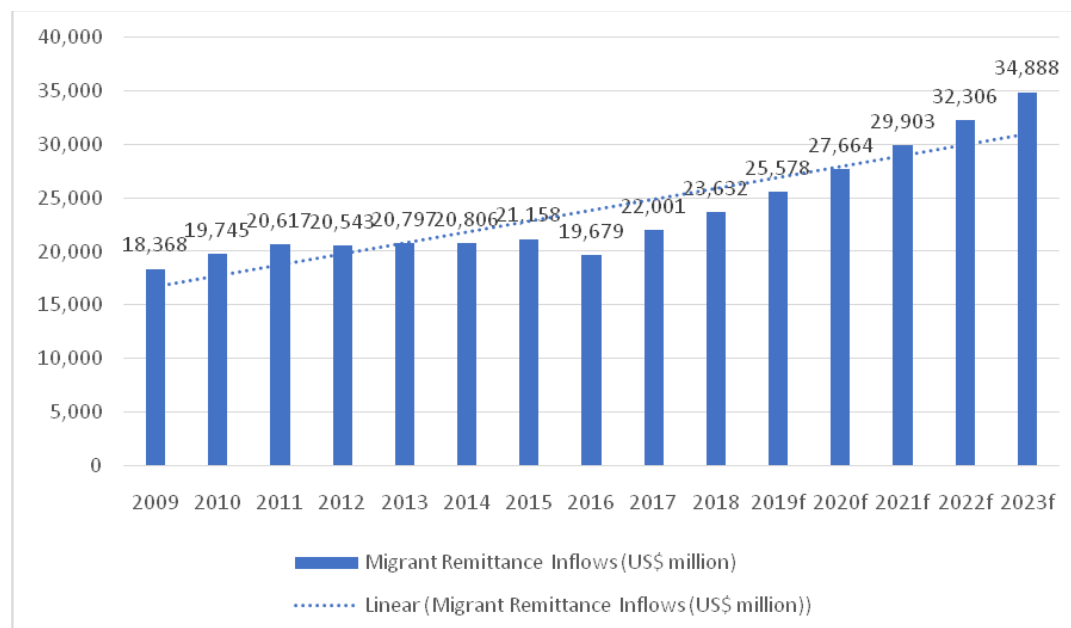
Omolo (1997) stresses that “citizenship theory is especially appropriate in reviewing ethnicity in Africa because it introduces a discourse of rights and obligations as well as of opportunity and constraint in a political community.” It also defines how elites in an electoral process perceive opportunities/constraints as regards their objectives of capturing state power through the means of ethnic mobilization in different countries. However, the aspect of electoral processes when linked to ethnicity and citizenship is not the preoccupation of the present study. This study sets out to investigate the natural force which citizenship exerts on individuals in the quest for social and economic development and emancipation of their people. This becomes all the more evident when it is obvious, through history and antecedents, that certain regions or areas of a particular geographical entity are marginalized or totally excluded from the general economic development plans of the state. Applying the citizenship theory to the political situation in Nigeria especially since the return to democratic rule, we argue that it has been such a herculean task for national integration to be achieved in the polity especially when it is glaring that people of the South-East are not factored in during planning and execution of development plans. This is largely for the fact that it has also been turned into a means of asserting undeserved claims of political superiority of one ethnic group over another.

Application of the theory

In applying the structural-functional theory to this study, it becomes expedient to view the contributions of diasporan Igbos as a structurally inherent and natural attribute of people of the South-East of Nigeria. Right from the periods prior to Nigeria's independence, through the civil war times, and the era of return to

participatory democracy, Igbos in different parts of the world have always organized themselves under some form of umbrella organization. The notion of diaspora kith and kin, to any Igbo man and woman, does not really end with those who reside outside the shores of Nigeria. It actually means every native Igbo who does not reside and do their businesses in the Igboland, whether they reside overseas or in other non-Igbo regions of Nigeria. The town unions structurally, are embedded in the daily reckoning of any Igbo man wherever they may find themselves. This attribute resonates with all Igbos in their different sub-dialects naturally. Hence, this theory adequately explains the natural yearning of every Igbo to link up with their kith and kin back home and contribute economically, no matter where they may reside in the world.

Figure 1.0: Nigeria: Migrant remittance inflows (2009 - 2023f), US\$ million



Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers (2019). *Strength from Abroad: The Economic Power of Nigeria's Diaspora*

Figure 1.0 shows migrant remittance inflows from Nigerian diasporans from 2009 to 2023. From the data, it is clear that migrant remittances to Nigeria steadily increased from 2016 when it was \$19,679 US to 2023 when it recorded the sum of \$34,888 US. While there may not be available data on Igbo diaspora remittances, but it is understandable that majority of those that remit these funds are Igbo diaspora who send predominantly from the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Though, there are still good number of Igbo diasporans in Asia, North and South America, and other African countries, the ones in Europe and the United States far outnumber those. These remittances have contributed in no small measure to the economic development of Nigeria as hundreds of community self-effort projects in Igboland attests to.

Interestingly, diaspora remittances to Nigeria have surpassed the country's foreign direct investment (FDI), even some receipts from Official Development Assistance do not measure up to what comes into the country in form of diaspora remittances. Indices in 2018 show that Diaspora remittances to Nigeria

equalled US\$25billion, representing 6.1% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Bank, 2020). Furthermore, 2018 Diaspora remittances translate to 83% of the Federal Government budget for the year and 11 (eleven) times the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows in the same period. Among other things, it is discovered that Nigeria's remittance from Diaspora migrants 7.4 times larger than the net official development assistance received in 2019 which stood at US\$3.4 billion (Knomad, 2020).

Data presentation and analysis

Nigerians in the diaspora have achieved monumental milestones in rural development in Nigeria. This felt because such have been captured over the years, for instance, in 2018 for instance, remittance translates to 83% of Federal Government Budget, 11 times the FDI and 7 times larger than the net official development assistance of \$3.4bn in 2017. Specifically, in report by World Bank, (2020), Nigeria was ranked among the top 10 remittances receiving countries India (\$76bn), China (\$60bn), Mexico (\$41bn), Philippines (\$33bn), Egypt (\$24bn), Pakistan (\$24bn) and Nigeria (\$21bn) (World Bank, 2020). It is also true for Diasporan Igbos who have made giant strides economically. However, many of these contributions are not readily captured in economic indices as a result of unavailability of reliable data for proper appraisal. However, a run-down of some realities in the south east would throw more light on their contributions over the years. Looking at even the budget for development projects in the six geopolitical zones of the Nigerian federation in 2018, Osuagwu and Okhiku (2023, p. 14) notes that;

“... from the total of N286.76 billion earmarked for development projects in the six geopolitical zones in the country the funds were distributed as follows; North-East-46.69 billion (16.3%), the North-Central 53.87 billion (18.8%), North-West 73.7 billion (25.7%), the South-South- 35.31 billion (12.3%), the South-West 48.97 billion (17.1%), the South-East got 28.22 billion (09.8%). When compared to the sum received by other zones, it is clear that the distribution is neither fair nor inclusive, rather it is aimed at excluding the people of the region socially and economically and to outrightly under develop them.

Though the above has been the reality for people of the south east of Nigeria, but ironically it is evident that major indices for measurement of social and economic development are still more favourable in the same region. For instance, a comparison of antenatal health care indices between the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria and the South East shows that the percentage of women who receive antenatal care from skilled providers are quite high in the South East geopolitical zone than in the North Central. Also, the percentage of women who are delivered by skilled health care providers are well above what is obtainable in the North Central zone even in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT-Abuja). The differences in what the government provides and the private sector is supported by the contributions of diasporan Igbos

Table 1.0 Comparison of North Central and South East Antenatal Health indices

Region	State	Percentage of receiving antenatal care from a skilled provider	Percentage delivered by a skilled provider
North Central	FCT-Abuja	87.7	71.6
	Benue	74.1	67.6
	Kogi	79.5	73.4
	Kwara	72.8	62.1
	Nasarawa	77.1	57.3
	Niger	41.5	24.7
	Plateau	72.4	42.9
South East	Abia	95.2	95.8
	Anambra	93.3	94.7
	Ebonyi	70.3	52.1
	Enugu	94.7	93.0
	Imo	97.4	98.2

Source: National Population Commission (2019).

It does not stop there, in many towns and villages Igbos in the diaspora have continued to organize diaspora-sponsored building projects, medical outreaches, book launch for library stocking and so many other projects. Many of the available infrastructure that support what is obtainable for the peoples' use have been provided through the contributions of the diasporan Igbos in conjunction with the local community development associations. The increasing number of Igbo diaspora is encouraged by the harsh economic situation in Nigeria especially since mid-2015. In many European countries such as Italy, Belgium, Holland, France, Britain, and many more, the number of Igbo Diaspora who are experts in their profession continue to swell to the advantage of those who reside on the home front. The Igbo communities in the Diaspora have the largest number of its Diaspora citizens from Nigeria. It is estimated that the Igbos in Diaspora repatriates between 55% and 65% of total remittance into Nigeria (Mbama, 2015). This translates to \$13.37 billion to \$15.80 billion using the official figure for 2018. This amount of fund would greatly transform any village into a modern living community with improved infrastructural facilities just like it is seen in Nnewi in Anambra state, South East Nigeria. In Ebonyi state of Nigeria, diasporan Igbos have taken up and concluded the construction of many rural roads including feeder roads which link farming villages to markets where their farm produce can be sold (Udeuhele and Ofor, 2023).

Talking about the volume of remittances from Nigerian diaspora of which Igbos are a major part of it, in a report by World Bank (2013), Nigeria was ranked amongst the top remittances receiving countries in the world, it is four places behind India (\$71bn), China (\$60bn), Philippines (\$26bn) and Mexico (\$22bn) respectively. In Africa, Nigeria remains the highest remittances recipient in sub-Saharan Africa and the second highest in Africa after Egypt. In 2021, Nigeria received \$ 19.5 billion (20 percent of the continent's total value of remittances in the year) while Egypt received \$32.5 billion (30 percent of the continent's total value of remittances in the year, and in 2022, Nigeria received \$ 21 billion (Urana, 2023). It is discovered that the remittances inflows have remained steadily upward since 2014 when it stood at \$20.8 billion and 3.8 percent of the annual Gross Domestic Product for that year. Four years later i.e in 2018, the remittances stood at \$25.1 billion and 6.1 percent of the GDP in Nigeria (Aja., Nnaji and Itumo, 2023).

Enumerating in concrete terms some of the projects embarked upon by Igbo diasporans, the World Bank report in 1996 records that;

In the South Eastern zone, the Ihiagwa community-based organisation in Imo State established a maternity home, a postal office, a Baptist Secondary School and a Catholic Mission residential complex. It offered scholarships to qualified students. One of the scholarship recipients, Dr. Kennedy Okeke, founded Horizon International Medical Mission (HIMM) in the United States in 1991. This organisation arrived in Nigeria in the year 2000 on a medical mission to help the less fortunate.

Furthermore, town unions and other development associations have taken up the construction of social services in villages in Enugu State, Nigeria. Accounts of construction of roads in Nsukka LGA in 2010 up to about 46.5 miles which has assisted the inhabitants of the villages in transporting their goods to points of sale (Ugwu, 2013).

In every kindred, village and town in Igboland, there is always a unifying organization of the people wherever they may find themselves. This is a valuable characteristic of the Igbos which naturally emanate from their “Umunna” value and norm. As a result of this it becomes common place to find such bodies as Okigwe Development Union or Association in Kano, Kaduna, Jos, Lagos, London, Rome, and every other city Igbos are found. So also, it is for the different towns and villages in Igboland. These organizations function as rallying points for articulating development efforts for their homelands from where they came. Pipe borne water projects, Town halls, Borehole projects, even community primary and secondary schools have been built through these community efforts.

Figure 3.0 below shows the distribution of public and private health facilities by geopolitical zone per 100,000 (one hundred thousand of population), it indicates that in all other region public health facilities outnumber the private ones. Hence, the government has been allocating more resources for public health in those regions, but in the south east it is the private health facilities that outnumber the public ones. The only other zone where the private health facilities outnumber public one is the south west zone, where it could favourably be argued that there are also good number of south easterners who own many of those health facilities. The point to make here is that diasporan Igbos have contributed to the establishment of many primary health facilities in different villages, towns and cities in the South east of Nigeria.

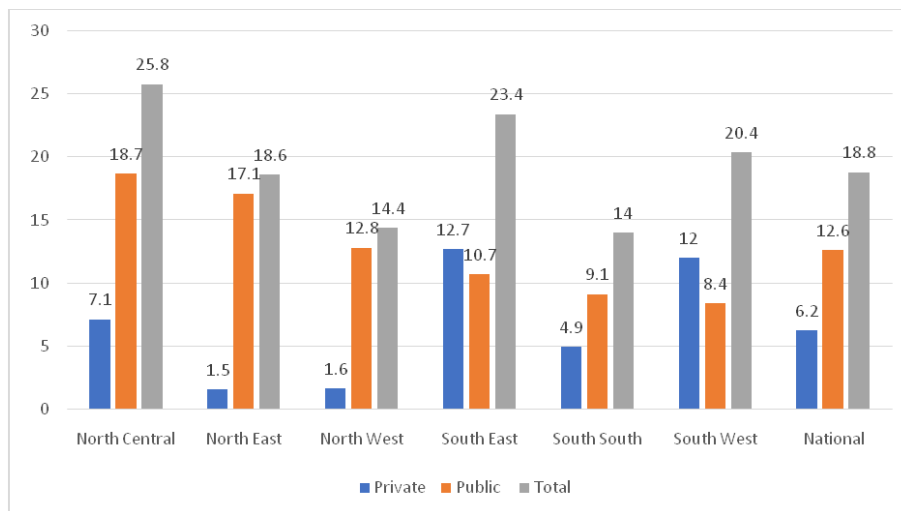


Figure 2.0: Distribution of Public and Private Health Facilities by Geopolitical zone (Distribution per 100,000 Population)

Source: Japan International Cooperation Agency, Data Collection Survey on the Health System in Nigeria Final Report 2021

Findings

This study examined the motivating factors for economic development efforts by diasporan Igbos. Also, whether the activities of the Igbo diasporan community has contributed to the economic development of the South-East region of Nigeria. And finally, the aspects of the South East economy where the diasporan Igbos have played key roles. After analyzing data in the study, the following findings were arrived at;

First, the motivating factors for economic development efforts of Diasporan Igbos are;

- i. They have the natural understanding of the 'Umunna' value and culture of the Igbos. That is the natural propensity to live for one another in a community setting;
- ii. The shared experience of the Igbos before, during, and immediately after the Nigeria-Biafra civil war, some of which were the economic exclusion policies of those who led from the center in Lagos, and the hunger caused by food blockade as a war strategy.
- iii. Also, many diasporans especially those that were jointly sponsored through community efforts to proceed to Europe for their higher education. These individuals see it as a task that must be accomplished for the lives of those at home to be assisted to lie a better life.

Second, that the activities of Diasporan Igbos have contributed immensely to the economic development of villages, towns and cities in the southeast region of Nigeria. This they accomplish through the construction of Primary and secondary schools, community halls, libraries, water borehole projects, event centres, and many others.

Third, the aspect of the lives of southeasterners where Igbo diasporans have made the most effort is in the areas of infrastructure, and provision of financial support for the less-privileged. Also, the provision of food items for those who could not afford all they need to survive, for example, during the Covid-19 period and such difficult times.

Conclusion

So far, this paper has examined the motivating factors for economic development efforts by diasporan Igbos. Also, whether the activities of the Igbo diasporan community has contributed to the economic development of the South-East region of Nigeria. And finally, the aspects of the South East economy where the diasporan Igbos have played key roles. This paper concludes that though the diasporan Igbos have done very well in contributing to the economic development of the southeast, but there are still avenues and areas in which their support could be directed in order to maximally harness their capacity. Such areas include technology transfer, professional exchanges in state-owned medical, and educational facilities. This would aid capacity building and sustainability.

Recommendations

After considering the research findings in this study, the following recommendations are therefore, advanced;

First, both the state and local government authorities in the states of the south east of Nigeria should develop a data base on the actual number and location of Igbo diaspora in their areas. This is in order to

further take advantage of the linkage established with the Igbo diaspora to make them think more of 'home' when it comes to investments and repatriation of their acquired technological expertise back home for social and economic development.

Second, local and state authorities in Igboland should establish a novel framework for infrastructural development of the south east by granting concessions to diasporan Igbos whereby they could indulge in partnerships or totally financing major projects and run such for an agreed period before handing over to the government. By so doing, the impact of diasporan Igbos would be significant and better recognized.

Third, in order to move further from establishment of community self-help projects such as schools, markets, water boreholes, stocking of school laboratories, and community libraries, they could go into establishment of medium-scale industries such as extensive palm plantations. From such industries many other small-scale industries such as those that produce cooking oil, roughages for animal feed, cosmetics, palm kernel oil would spring up for active youth engagement.

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