

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF LOWER BENUE RIVER BASIN AUTHORITY IN NASARAWA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority has been in existence for decades and has of recent attracted criticisms regarding its continued funding going by its seemingly weak performance. This study aims at evaluating the performance of Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority since inception using Nasarawa State as a case study.

Design/methodology/approach: The major data collection instrument was focused group discussion complemented by official records of data on number of projects executed. The measurable indicators required were related to the variables having direct link with the activities of the agency. Nasarawa State has a total of 13 LGAs and 1610 localities from where 13 localities were systematically sampled; one from each Local Government Area. A total of 13 community leaders were then purposefully selected, one from each community. Using an evaluation scale of 1 for very low and 5 for very high, the community leaders were engaged to evaluate impact of project activities on host communities, extent of achievement of its developmental objectives, and factors influencing the distribution of projects across the state. Descriptive statistics were utilized in the analysis and discussion of findings.

Findings: The result shows that a total of 107 (50.23%) projects out of the total of 213 projects executed by the agency in Nasarawa State were concentrated in 4 Local Government Areas of Lafia, Akwanga, Doma and Awe. Majority of the Local Government Areas had only water borehole projects which accounted for 88.26% of total projects executed in the state.

Research limitations/Implications: This study is limited to the use of data from the official records of government and as such further study should endeavour to investigate these projects by visiting all project communities. This performance evaluation of LBRBDA could be improved by studying all the states covered by LBRBDA activities. These limitations notwithstanding, the findings from this study provide some level of insight that could gauge the overall performance of LBRBDA in Nigeria. The contribution to knowledge is that this study evaluated the performance of LBRBDA in Nasarawa state.

Practical implications: It is recommended that government should consolidate the gains of River Basin Development Authority by ensuring sustainability and full development of its potentials for rapid improvement of the standard of living of rural dwellers.

Originality/value: An important deduction from the findings is that, apart from poor project spread across the state, the LBRBDA has performed abysmally very low since inception.

Keywords: Evaluation; performance; rural projects; river basin authority; Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

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1. INTRODUCTION

River Basin is a term used for the entire geographical area drained by a river and its tributaries. It is a concept that has been adopted in regional planning especially after the success of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in the United States of America. Development of river basins in the second half of the 20th century unfolded under the banner of integrated, or unified, river basin development, out of enthusiasm for large-scale undertakings as epitomized by the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) after the Great Depression, of the 1930s. The River basin development theory has since spread world-wide and has met with appreciable success most especially in developed countries particularly China where the Chinese government has been able to harness her water resources to serve as a prime mover for development of her national economy. In Mexico Socio-economic development has always been tightly linked to water. From 1947 to 1960, several river basin executive commissions (RBEs) were established, primarily to promote hydraulic development. These were run by the federal government with little interaction with water users' associations, other states and local entities. They became powerful regional entities that altered state and regional politics. In 1989, the National Water Commission (NWC) was the sole federal water authority and had broad responsibilities dealing with water rights, allocation, use, effluent charges, infrastructure, and operations (Mestre, 2001). Mexico currently has 25 river basin councils, 6 basin commissions, 2 basin committees, and 38 groundwater technical committees. Users are increasingly interested in learning more about management and taking on roles formerly played by government entities. The river basin councils are beginning to play a greater role in planning.

Awachie (1993) observed that river basin planning strategy is an important part of the framework within which developing countries take measures to support state control, structured planning and consideration of socioeconomic issues during resource development. A number of countries, with an eye to promoting integrated area development, e.g., the Damodar Valley Corporation in India (established 1948), Colombia's Corporation Autonoma Regional del Cauca (established 1954); Sri Lanka's Gal Oya Development Board (established 1949); and the Helmand Valley Authority, Afghanistan (established 1953). In Sri Lanka, the Accelerated Mahaweli Programme (emerged in 1978 from the Mahaweli Project which begun in 1969) has become one of the world's largest River Basin Development Authority efforts (Perritt, 1989). In the Philippines, RBDA has been used as a route to rural and decentralized development; with some of the impetus coming from US funding bodies such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

In Nigeria, the river basin development strategy was first introduced in 1973 by the Federal government through the establishment of Chad-Basin Development Authority (CBDA) to undertake land and water resources development in the Chad basin (Ebong, 1988). Against the background of its achievements recorded in its first early years, the decree establishing it was subsequently reviewed and in 1976 more river basin development Authorities were established in the country to bring to a total of thirteen including Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority (LBRBDA). LBRBDA with its headquarters in Makurdi was established in 1976 along with 10 other River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) by Decree No. 25 of 1976. The main aim of the RBDAs was the development of the water resources potential of the country for agricultural, domestic and industrial uses. Furthermore, the RBDAs were to be involved in the maintenance of the various watersheds that they cover in Nigeria. Among the many functions the RBDAs were to perform in this regard include the construction of, Dykes, Dams, feeder roads, the drilling of boreholes, development of irrigation infrastructure, erosion and flood control. Also to provide sustainable access to safe and sufficient water resources to meet the agricultural and socio-economic development needs of people in the catchment area, and other various uses in ways that contribute to public health, poverty eradication, enhanced food security and at the same time maintaining the integrity of freshwater ecosystem of catchment areas. LBRBDA catchment area covers Benue State, Plateau State, Nasarawa State and eastern parts of Kogi State. It covers altogether, 10 Senatorial Districts, 3 each in Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa States, and 1 from Kogi State. Figure 1 shows the catchment states.

In Nigeria, most rural areas receive fewer infrastructure than the urban areas. The implication is that the kind of infrastructure put in place determines the level of poverty. Most of the poor are in rural areas, and the growth of farm productivity and non-farm rural employment is linked closely to the type and quality of infrastructure in place (Atser, 2012). This means that countries that will provide adequate infrastructure in rural areas will succeed in reducing rural poverty drastically. Infrastructural provisions and socio-economic facilities in Nigeria differ from region to region (Oguzor, 2011). The

evidence of disparity in development and infrastructure assets accounts for the varying levels of development across the country.

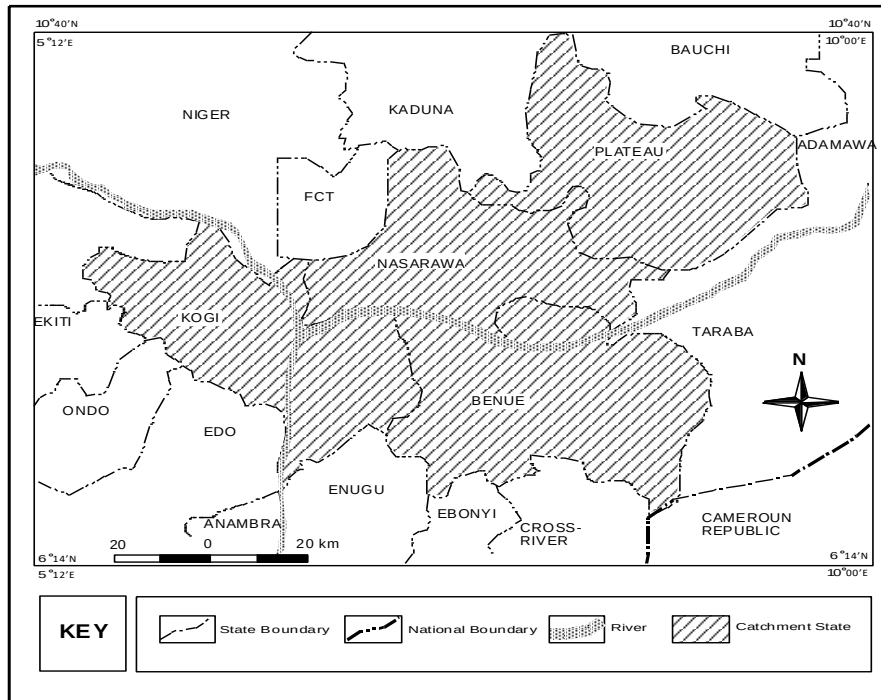


Figure 1: Catchment States of Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority

Source: Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority, Makurdi (2022)

Several decades have passed since the inception of River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDAs), however, their performance levels have not been empirically established to justify their continuous funding and reliance as development strategy. Although, the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority is one of the eleven river basin authorities established in 1976 as a deliberate programme to revitalize agriculture and enhance regional development, infrastructure provision in Nasarawa State does not match the demand and changing times as evidenced in increasing population and physical expansion of communities. By virtue of the fact that most of the communities in Nasarawa State are rural, and with the near absence of infrastructure which is a common characteristic of rural communities, and based on the value of River Basin Development Authority as a regional planning model, this study is undertaken to evaluate the performance level of Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority, using Nasarawa State.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

Against the background of the study, the objectives are to:

- i. Evaluate the performance level of LBRBDA in Nasarawa State,
- ii. Evaluate of extent of achievement of objectives and regional coverage by LBRBDA,
- iii. Assess the impact of projects on host communities
- iv. Examine factors of Spatial Spread of Projects

The result of the study is expected to contribute to on-going debate on continued funding or otherwise of LBRBDA

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDA) in Nigeria

Nigeria's policy on RBRDAs had its nucleus from the initiatives of some states in instituting River Basin projects as far back as 1953 when the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) was commissioned to investigate the possibilities of establishing a pilot irrigation scheme on the Sokoto-Rima River Basin. By 1965, other agencies, particularly the UNESCO, were invited to

carry out similar feasibility studies of river basins by some other states of the federation. These initial studies materialized into the Sokoto-Rima, Chad Basin and Hadeja-Jamaare River Basin Development Authorities. As a development strategy, the RBRDAs were created to embark on a systematic exploitation of land and water resources that abound in the country. Besides being closely identified with local/rural problems at the grassroots, the authorities facilitated the smooth preparation and execution of projects, especially infrastructures that cut across state boundaries. In this regard, the RBRDAs were conceived not only as agents that spread the traits of development but also ones capable of fostering rapid development of the rural areas of the country. It was in the light of the above considerations that on June 25, 1976, by Decree No. 25, the Federal Government set up eleven River Basin Authorities whose activities covered all the states of the federation. The RBDAs were given extra responsibilities for rural development and were thus, re-designated as River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDAs). Even though the RBRDAs were formally established by the Murtala/Obasanjo regime, the project was vigorously supported and pursued by the Shagari and Buhari administrations which considered the scheme the nerve centre of agricultural and, more importantly, rural development (Emeghara, 2010). The 11 River Basin Development Authorities by Decree 25 of June 1976 are to perform the following functions:

- i. To undertake comprehensive development of both surface and underground water resources for multi-purpose uses;
- ii. To undertake schemes for the control of floods and erosion and for water-shed management including afforestation;
- iii. To construct and maintain dams, dykes, polders, wells, bore-holes, irrigation and drainage systems and other works necessary for the achievement of the Authority's functions under this section;
- iv. To provide water from reservoirs and lakes under the control of the authority for irrigation purposes to farmers and recognized associations as well as for urban water supply schemes for a fee to be determined by the Authority concerned with the approval of the commissioner;
- v. The control of pollution in rivers, lakes, Lagoons and creeks in the Authority's area in accordance with national laid down standards;
- vi. To develop fisheries and improve navigation on the rivers, lakes, reservoirs, lagoons and creeks in the authority's area;
- vii. To process crops, livestock products and fish produced by farmers in the Authority's area in partnership with state agencies and any other person.
- viii. To assist the State and Local Governments in the implementation of the following rural development work in the authority's area:
 - a. The provision of power for rural electrification schemes from suitable irrigation dams and other types of power stations under the control of the authority concerned.
 - b. The construction of small dams, wells and boreholes for rural water supply schemes and of feeder roads for the evacuation of farm products.
 - c. The establishment of agro-service centres.
 - d. The establishment of grazing reserve.
 - e. The training of staff for the running and maintenance of rural development schemes and for-general extension works at village level.

The Federal Government of Nigeria increased the numbers of the River Basin Development Authorities from 11 in 1976 to 18 in 1984 to ensure that every state in the federation has a River Basin Authority except Lagos and Ogun States that have one River Basin Development Authority to operate within their boundaries. The name of the, River Basin Development Authorities has been changed to River Basin and Rural Development Authorities to reflect the extension of their primary functions to include rural development activities. In addition, there are International River Basin Development Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Development Commission (Oyebande, 2001). The RBDAs are, therefore, the only regional planning frame work that comprehensively covers the Nigerian planning space without gaps and overlaps. According to Awachie (1993) they were intended to take development to the grassroots, and ensure equity and social justice in the development of urban and rural areas, by discouraging migration from the rural areas to the urban centres.

2.2. The Study Area

Nasarawa State was created on October 1, 1996. The state was excised from old Plateau State. It is situated on the Benue Plateau highlands and strategically located in the center of what has come to be known as the Middle Belt political region. The state, with a land mass of 120,000 square kilometers is located in the Savannah belt of Nigeria. It has a climate typical of the tropical Zone. The population of the State as at 2006 was 1,869,377 persons (NPC 2006) with a projected population of 2,989,371 persons in 2022 using an annual growth rate of 2.8 percent. The State is made up of about 300 ethnics, sub ethnic and cultural groups each with a distinct heritage; living in peace and social harmony with one another. Among the ethnic and sub-ethnic groups are the Alago, Eggon, Gbagyi, Gwandara, Egbira, Migili, Kantana, Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri, Tiv, Afo, Gade, Nyankpa, Jukun, Mada, Ninzom, Buh, Bassa, Agatu, Arum, Kulere, Ibo, Yoruba. People from other parts of the country co-exist peacefully with the indigenes. The state is politically structured into 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs) namely Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keana, Keffi, Kokona, Lafia, Nasarawa Eggon, Obi, Toto and Wamba. Nasarawa state lies between latitudes $6^{\circ} 94'$ and $9^{\circ} 52'$ North and longitudes $6^{\circ} 83'$ and $9^{\circ} 22'$ East. The state is accessible through Benue State to the South and Kogi State to the West, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja to the Northwest, Kaduna and Plateau States to the Northeast, and Taraba State to the Southeast.

A significant proportion of the state's landmass is covered by rocky terrains, with mountains rising to an average height of about 11400m above sea level. Areas such as Nasarawa, Nassarawa Eggon, Wamba, Keffi and Akwanga are generally hilly and rocky, while areas such as Lafia, Doma, Awe and Keana are of plain terrain. River Benue, one of the famous rivers in Africa and its tributaries pass through some parts of the state. The state has a climate typical of the tropical zone because of its location. It has a maximum temperature of 32°C and a minimum temperature of 27°C . It is characterized by two distinct wet and dry seasons. Rainfall varies from 1317mm in some places to 1450mm in others. The months of December, January and February are very cold due to harmattan wind blowing across the state from the Northeast. The dry season spans through the months of November to February, while the rainy season occurs between the months of March and October. Nasarawa State is the only state in Nigeria that has Tantalite, a rare mineral used in the manufacturing of spacecraft. Tantalite is considered a strategic mineral in the Defense Industry because it is used in the manufacturing of ammunition. Barite is amongst other minerals found in the state. Some other minerals found in the state are Marble, Columbite, Limestone and Monazite.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research design of the study is such that information was collected from both informal and formal sources such as official records from LBRBDA and other related government agencies with information on the activities of River Basins Development Authorities. On the other hand, focus group discussion was employed to evaluate the performance of LBRBDA on host communities. Focus Group Discussion provided information on the level of achievement, impact of LBRBDA activities on host communities, and factors influencing distribution of projects in the state. The measurable indicators required for this study relate to the variables having direct link with LBRBDA activities and six of these variables are found useful in this research as shown in Table 1. The major data collection instrument was focus group discussion complemented by official records.

Table 1: List of independent variables and units of measurement

S/N	Indices	Unit of Measurement
1	Feeder roads	Length (km)
2	Water boreholes	Number/type
3	Dams	Number
4	Irrigation schemes	Number/type
5	Erosion control projects	Number
6	Availability of rural electricity	Presence/Absence

4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1. Number of projects executed by LBRBDA

The Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority (LBRBDA) with headquarters at Makurdi came into being along ten others in the country in 1976. The River Basin Development Authorities were to among other things boost mechanized agriculture by optimizing the land and water resources potentials within their areas of operation for multiple uses. Access road construction and maintenance is one of the principal functions of Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority to provide accessibility to hinterlands and also to help in evacuating farm produce to major market areas. A total of 10 feeder roads made up of 4 upgraded feeder roads and 6 constructed feeder roads having a total of 118kms were constructed since inception in the four LGAs (Table 2).

Table 2: The Number of projects by LBRBDA in Nasarawa State.

S.No	Name of LGA	Bore holes	Dams	Irrigation schemes	Feeder Roads	Erosion Control	Rural Electrification	Total number of projects	%	Rank
1.	Lafia	34	1	2	2 (15, 8km)	1	-	40	18.8	1
2.	Akwanga	19	1	2	3(20,15,10km)	-	-	25	11.7	3
3.	Doma	19	1	3	3(12,10,6km)	-	-	26	12.2	2
4.	Awe	12	-	2	2(15, 7km)	-	-	16	7.5	6
5.	Obi	6	-	-	-	-	-	6	2.8	11
6.	Keana	7	-	-	-	-	-	7	3.3	10
7.	Nasarawa Eggon	19	-	-	-	-	-	19	8.9	4
8.	Wamba	7	-	-	-	-	-	7	3.3	9
9.	Kokona	13	-	1	-	-	-	14	6.6	7
10.	Keffi	9	-	1	-	-	-	10	4.7	8
11.	Karu	16	-	-	-	-	-	16	7.5	6
12.	Nasarawa	17	-	-	-	-	-	17	8.0	5
13.	Toto	10	-	-	-	-	-	10	4.7	8
	Total	188	3	11	10 (118kms)	1	0	213	96.7	

In Nigeria the Federal Ministry of Water Resources is saddled with the responsibility of constructing dyke dams for multiple uses through the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs). In Nasarawa State three dams have been constructed by the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority: Doma dam, Tede dam and Dep dam respectively. The Doma dam has a capacity of 57.5 mcm and is the largest of all the authority's earth dams in the state. The dam which has potentials of irrigating 3000 hectares of farm land has greatly affected the economic and social life of the town where it is situated by way of fishing, irrigated agriculture and for domestic purpose. The Nasarawa State Government in collaboration with the World Bank is now lifting the harnessed dam water to provide pipe borne water to the entire Doma Community and its environs. The Tede dam in Akwanga LGA has a capacity of 34.0mcm while the Dep dam in Lafia LGA has a capacity of 38.5mcm and has potentials of irrigating over 2500 hectares of farm land. One of the cardinal tenets of the River Basin is irrigated agriculture to supplement the rain fed agriculture for the teeming population. Irrigated agricultural facilities are correspondingly being developed at dam sites and along natural river basins of its catchment area namely Benue, Nasarawa, and Plateau and Eastern parts of Kogi States. The total area so far under irrigation in Nasarawa State is about 7110 hectares of farm land throughout the project locations. In a study carried out by Kanagawa and Nakata (2008) in Zimbabwe indicated that irrigation projects have been successful in enabling farmers to generate more income and sustainability more than dry land farmers, thereby reducing rural-urban migration. In terms of boreholes drilling and geophysical survey, the Authority has drilled and maintained boreholes for private individuals, corporate bodies, communities and governments. Achievements in this regard are numerous. For example, the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority has drilled about 188 boreholes in Nasarawa State, in line with their objective of developing the underground water resources (Table 2). From Table 2, about 107 projects out of the total of 213 (50.23%) projects executed by LBRBDA in Nasarawa State were concentrated in 4 LGAs of Lafia, Akwanga, Doma and Awe. Apart from Kokona and Keffi LGAs which had one irrigation scheme each, the nine LGAs with 49.77% of the projects were mainly borehole water projects. This implies poor project spread across the state.

4.2. Focused Group Discussions/Evaluation of extent of regional development

Focused Group Discussions (FGD) were held with a view to evaluating the extent of regional development from the activities of LBRBDA. According to Masadeh (2012), Ryan *et al.* (2014), and Dawson *et al.* (2014), focused group discussions generate responses that are useful for evaluating policy and programme successes or failures. Nasarawa State has a total of 13 LGAs and 1610 localities from where 13 localities were systematically selected. A total of 13 community leaders were then purposefully selected, one from each community. The community leaders were engaged in a face-to-face discussion that lasted for two hours. Discussions were centred on impact of LBRBDA activities on regional development, extent of achievement of its developmental objectives, and factors influencing the distribution of projects across the state. On the average these factors were evaluated using a scale of 1 for very low, 2 for low, 3 for moderate, 4 for high and 5 for very high. The objectives setting the RBDAs as well as previous research experiences guided the development of questions aimed at addressing the research objectives. The meeting was held in one of the hotels in Lafia town and the proceedings were tape-recorded so as to capture all contributions. The data was transcribed and descriptive statistics were utilized in data presentation and analysis.

The Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority projects have been identified as key elements of development through the construction of dams, irrigation schemes, erosion/flood control works, feeder roads and provision of borehole water projects. The extent to which these activities have impacted the host communities is directly related to the level of improvement of standard of living. For the purpose of evaluating the extent of achievement of objectives setting up the RBDAs, the objectives of RBDAs were utilized. The 13 community leaders were engaged to evaluate the extent to which the objectives have been achieved. Each of them rated the extent of achievement of the objectives using global best practices and the result is presented in Table 3. From the result as shown in Table 3, the result of the assessment indicates a moderate (58.31%) rating of performance in terms of goal achievement.

Table 3: Evaluation of extent of achievement of objectives and regional coverage by LBRBDA

S.No.	Group Discussants		Regional coverage (%)	Official Records		
	LGA	Extent of achievement of objectives (%)		Localities with projects	Number of localities	% coverage
1	Lafia	77	51	21	146	1.30
2	Obi	57	47	5	120	0.31
3	Doma	64	44	13	95	0.81
4	N/Eggon	68	56	15	150	0.93
5	Akwanga	66	44	12	140	0.75
6	Wamba	55	50	6	75	0.37
7	Karu	62	52	11	152	0.68
8	Nasarawa	52	46	16	135	0.99
9	Toto	48	49	7	123	0.43
10	Keana	45	45	5	84	0.31
11	Awe	52	41	9	110	0.56
12	Keffi	58	43	5	131	0.31
13	Kokona	54	49	11	149	0.68
Total Assessment		58.31	47.46	136	1,610	8.43

In terms of regional coverage, the result shows that the coverage is weak with 47.46% rating. Several communities were not covered in the activities of the agency (Table 3). From the findings, out of 1610 localities in the state, only 136 localities which represent 8.45 percent have projects undertaken by Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority. As shown in Table 2, a total of 188 boreholes were provided across the 136 localities in Nasarawa State. There were 3 Earth Dams located in Doma LGA, LafiaLGA and Akwanga LGA of Nasarawa State, while a total of 11 localities had sprinkler irrigation schemes spread in 6 LGAs with Doma having 3, Lafia, Akwanga and Awe LGAs had 2 each while Keffi and Kokona had 1 each. In terms of feeder roads, a total of 118 kilometres of feeder roads was constructed and upgraded across 4 LGAs of Akwanga (45kms), Doma(28kms), Lafia(23kms) and Awe(22kms). Interestingly, of the 213 number of projects executed 188 projects which represent 88.26% were boreholes water projects.

4.3. Impact of Projects on host Communities

This research employed a combination of field observation and focus group discussion to achieve an insight into the socio- economic impact of the authority's activities on host communities. From Table 4, the result of focused group discussion revealed that about 85.71% of the impact variables were significantly impacted in host communities except the variable of peaceful coexistence that had an insignificant rating. This implies that these benefits may have eluded a vast majority of the communities going by the poor performance of the agency in terms of number of projects executed and their lopsided spread across the state, thereby perpetuating regional imbalance in development. From Table 4, the provision of the infrastructures has positively improved on income, employment, health condition, environmental awareness and the overall standard of living in benefiting project communities.

Table 4: Impact of projects on host communities

Impact Variables	Group Discussants													Sum	Mean	Rank
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
Improved income	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	60	4.62	2
Employment generation	4	3	5	5	5	5	3	4	3	5	3	5	3	53	4.08	3
Improved health condition	4	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	41	3.15	5
Improved standard of living	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	62	4.77	1
Peaceful coexistence	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	32	2.46	7
Increased environmental awareness	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	47	3.62	4
Improved environmental condition	3	4	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	40	3.08	6

4.4. Factors of Spatial Spread of Projects

Filed investigation has revealed that the location of projects in the localities were based on some factors such as geographical (physical), economic, social, cultural, financial, demographic and political considerations. In the case of the 3 Dams located in the state it was due to political influence as well as geographical considerations. Dams and irrigation schemes are relevant projects from the fact that they determine productivity levels especially during dry season. The 11 irrigation schemes were sited in close proximity to the three Dams except for Rutu locality and Rukubi locality in Doma LGA and Tunga locality in Awe LGA. In the case of Rutu locality, the irrigation farming is fed from Mada River while that of Rukubi locality is being fed from River Benue. Also, the irrigation farm in Tunga locality of Awe LGA is being fed from River Benue while that of Keffi and Kokona LGA is being fed by Mada river respectively. Erosion control projects are intended to improve agricultural lands, and by extension improve farm yields and control surface runoff water. Only one project is executed in this regard since inception. The construction and upgrading of feeder roads were to enhance accessibility among communities as well as promote easy evacuation of farm produce to market centres. A good example is the road constructed from Doma to Rutu and that of Andaha to Rinze as well as that of Awe to Tunga localities. For the drilling of boreholes across the state, consideration was given based on population as well as some political influences. From Table 5, the result of the focused group discussion revealed that about 71.43% of the factors had significant influence on choice of locations for projects going by the mean score above 3. The Table shows that the most significant factors are political, geographic, demographic, economic and social factors. The effects of these factors if not effectively addressed are that they may continue to increase lopsidedness and regional imbalance in resource distribution.

Table 5: Factors influencing projects distribution

Factors	Group Discussants													Sum	Mean	Rank
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
Geographic	5	5	4	5	5	4	3	4	5	5	5	4	5	59	4.54	2
Economic	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	40	3.08	4
Social	2	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	39	3.00	5
Political	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	61	4.69	1
Cultural	2	2	3	4	4	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	35	2.69	6
Demographic	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	5	5	4	5	3	3	49	3.77	3
Financial	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	4	3	3	2	2	2	33	2.54	7

Promoting universal access to electricity services is a key component of the Federal Government's commitment to reduce poverty. Today many Nigerians are without electricity for lighting, essential health services and the development of economic opportunities, especially in agriculture and micro enterprises. No meaningful development can take place without access to modern energy services. Likewise, without electricity, extending common democratic norms and values through radio and television will be a very difficult and unaccomplished task. Hence, rural electrification is indispensable factor for socio-economic development of the citizenry. Rural electrification scheme can be classified into two: quantifiable and non-quantifiable. The quantifiable benefits among others include its industrial, commercial, domestic and agricultural applications. Non-quantifiable however, is its effects on socio-political and employment creation for the rural populace. The LBRBDA did not do well in terms of rural electrification projects as no project was undertaken in this sector. Since lack of access to electricity and rural poverty are closely correlated, the non-provision of electricity projects in the study area has not only posed great threat to the living standards of the rural populace but also to the rapid socio-economic development of the people. There are two general options for supplying electricity to the rural or remote communities. These include the grid connection and the off-grid methods. Since the electricity supply from the National grid is insufficient, it is imperative for adoption of the off-grid alternatives.

In a study by Kanagawa and Nakata (2008), on rural electrification in Zambia shows that educational benefits resulting from rural electricity has improved through constant reading and practice at various household levels. Also, World Bank (2008) examined the welfare impact of rural electrification on the standard of living and argued that the benefit of electrification in poorer communities is enormous. Bastakoti (2006) in a study of rural electrification in Nepal argued that complementary service systems and policy coordination are necessary preconditions for the effective use of electricity power in rural communities. The result of low performance of LBRBDA in Nasarawa State is in congruity with the findings of Emeghara (2010) who evaluated the impact of Anambra-Imo River Basin and Rural Development Authority on Agricultural and Rural Development in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Feeder road is a correlate of the economic welfare and also a surrogate for community level of development. It has been estimated that more than 50 percent of the rural poor live in communities with poor access roads and above all poor access roads has been identified as one of the major problems of rural development (Atser, 2012). This is because improved road access enhances easy evacuation of farm produce to market centres. The findings from this study indicated that the contribution of LBRBDA in the development of feeder roads is abysmally low as only 10 feeder roads spanning 118 kilometres were constructed in only 4 out of 13 LGAs in the state. Borehole is an improved source of water supply and water is one of the essential needs of man. Securing access to potable water supply is a central issue of concern in rural areas. The importance of water supply for domestic uses cannot be compromised not only because of its social and economic values, but also because water-based sources of livelihoods have become critical to the survival and health of most rural households, providing valuable contributions to rural livelihoods and improve standard of living. Water is therefore a very strategic socio-economic asset especially in poor economies where wealth and survival are measured by the level of an access to water (Atser and Udoh, 2014). Water supply is a basic necessity to human life. The provision of water boreholes in the host communities has helped in reducing the hardship involved in covering long distances to streams and rivers for domestic water needs. From the result, a total of 188 water boreholes were provided across 136 out of 1610 localities by LBRBDA in Nasarawa State. This level of coverage is however, insignificant in the state and could be a reflection of the country at large.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has evaluated the extent of regional development by the activities of Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority using Nasarawa State as a case study. The LBRBDA has undertaken a number of projects which served as a springboard for evaluating its impact. An important deduction from the findings is that the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority has performed abysmally low since inception. It is recommended that government should consolidate the gains of River Basin Development Authority by ensuring its sustainability and full development of its potentials for rapid improvement of the standard of living of rural dwellers.

6. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to the use of data from the official records of government and as such further study should endeavor to investigate these projects by visiting such communities. This performance evaluation of LBRBDA could be improved by studying all the states covered by LBRBDA activities. These limitations notwithstanding, the findings from this study provide some level of insight that could gauge the overall performance of LBRBDA in Nigeria.

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