



# Exploring Activities of Urban Based Town Unions and Community Development in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This study examined the extent to which the activities of urban based town union relate to community development in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State. A sample of six hundred registered members of urban based town unions were used for the study. A purposive random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the respondents used for the study. A research instrument titled "Urban Based Town Union Activities and Community Development Questionnaire" (UBTUACDQ) was used for data collection. The data obtained were analyzed using Pearson's product moment correlation. The results of the analysis revealed that the activities of town unions in terms of youth vocational skills and adult literacy relates with community development in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State. Based on the results, it was recommended that Community members and youths should be trained on vocational skills for empowerment and self-reliance. Also, community leaders and officers should create more awareness on the benefits of adult literacy programmes to members of the community. Furthermore, government should establish banks and other financial institutions in the rural communities to enable members have access to credit facilities to empower themselves. Finally, urban-based town unions should carryout enlightenment campaign on their developmental activities.*

**Keywords:** *Activities of Urban Based Town Unions, Community Development, Pearson Correlation, Northern Senatorial District, Cross River State, Nigeria.*

## INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, urban-based town unions have long been essential to grassroots development, especially in areas with little infrastructure and formal government presence. These unions, which are made up of indigenous people who live in cities but have close ties to their rural villages, have become important drivers of socioeconomic change in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State. Town unions facilitate community-driven development projects such building schools, health facilities, rural electrification projects, and road maintenance by acting as forums for collective action [1]. In places like Calabar, Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, these organizations usually organize fundraising events, levies, and donations to raise

money, which they then use for domestic development. A strong sense of communal identity and a cultural duty to enhance the well-being of their rural counterparts guide their actions [2]. The influence of these urban-based groups has increased in the Northern Senatorial District, which comprises Local Government Areas like Ogoja, Obudu, Bekwarra, Obanliku, and Yala, due to the developmental void created by insufficient government financing and weak local institutions [3].

Additionally, by incorporating community members in the identification of needs, execution of initiatives, and monitoring of results, urban-based town unions play a crucial role in fostering participatory development. Accountability, sustainability, and ownership of development projects are all improved by this inclusive approach [4]. The full fulfillment of their developmental potential is nevertheless hampered by issues like political meddling, leadership conflicts, inadequate accountability, and a lack of cooperation with formal government structures, notwithstanding their contributions [5].

Furthermore, the appalling condition of rural villages due to a lack of basic infrastructure, including adequate roads, healthcare facilities, educational facilities, and a reliable supply of water, has been a cause for worry. Due to the inadequate amenities in rural areas, young people who are capable of doing so are migrating from rural to urban areas. Rural villages are rendered unappealing and dismal by the government's incapacity to supply these basic amenities. One of the factors contributing to the growth of community groups is the government's poor performance in addressing the socioeconomic demands of the populace. Numerous community unions and non-governmental groups have also worked together to improve rural residents' quality of life by providing basic amenities including health care, borehole water, and loan facilities. Some rural areas in the study region continue to be characterized by inadequate infrastructure, unemployment, high rates of illiteracy, high rates of crime, prostitution, etc., despite the government's concerted efforts. The absence of adult literacy programs, youth vocational training facilities, portable water supplies, etc., may be the cause of this [6].

In light of this, the purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which urban-based town union operations in Cross River State's Northern senatorial district are related to community development. In order to address the core focus of this study, this study seeks answers to the following questions: To what extent does youth vocational skills acquisition training relate to community development in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State? And how does adult literacy education relate to community development in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State? This mainly objective of this study is to examine the extent activities of urban-based town union relate to community development in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State. The paper is structured into five sections. After this introductory section, section two reviews related literature. The methodology is discussed in the third section. Section four comprises results and discussion of findings, and finally, section five draws conclusion based on the findings and recommends the way forward.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Empirical review*

Youth vocational skills and community development:

By examining the ways in which vocational training programs affect social, economic, and infrastructure development, Badrudeen (2025) investigates the effects of these programs on community development. This paper makes the case that vocational training is an effective

means of lowering unemployment, boosting local economies, and promoting social cohesion through a combination of theoretical frameworks and empirical case studies. This study examines the advantages and difficulties of putting such programs into practice through a thorough analysis of vocational training programs, especially in urban and developing regions. The impact of vocational skills training on youth employability and job creation in Lagos State was studied by Medun and Bello [7]. A sequential explanatory mixed technique was used by the researcher. A structured questionnaire and interviews with a purposefully chosen sample of participants provided the core data used in the study. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis were used to examine the gathered data. According to the study, skills acquisition (SA) and youth employability development (YED) in Lagos State were positively and significantly correlated ( $r = 0.788$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ,  $n = 118$ ).

Additionally, as the p-value calculated at 0.035 was less than the level of significance at 0.05, the Pearson correlation finding of ( $r = 0.795$ , p-value 0.035) showed a positive and significant relationship between youth employment and skills acquisition in Lagos State. Additionally, a substantial and positive association ( $r = 0.732$ , p-value 0.024) between skill acquisition and entrepreneurial capability in Lagos State was revealed by the Pearson correlation study. The calculated p-value (0.024) was below the significance level (0.05) selected for the investigation. These results demonstrated how young employability skills development and job creation in Lagos State had been impacted by vocational skill training and acquisition programs.

According to Patrick, Iruoje, and Obibessong's [8] research on the potential benefits of vocational education for community development, rural communities benefit from vocational education in terms of employment, economic empowerment, technical skills and knowledge needed for agriculture, and socioeconomic development.

Ironbar and Anam [9] look on how vocational training affects rural youth employment in Cross River State, Nigeria's Calabar South Local Government Area (LGA). The study aims to determine how much vocational training programs improve employability and help lower unemployment among young people in rural areas, given the region's constantly rising unemployment rates. Structured questionnaires were used to gather data from a sample of 250 rural youths using a cross-sectional survey approach. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods, such as chi-square tests. The results highlight the crucial role that skill development plays in reducing unemployment issues in rural communities by showing a strong positive correlation between involvement in vocational training and improved job status. However, employment results are still impacted by structural obstacles including restricted access to resources and economic opportunities. The study comes to the conclusion that encouraging sustainable rural youth employment and socioeconomic development in Calabar South LGA requires bolstering and growing vocational training programs in conjunction with supportive policy interventions.

Adult literacy education and community development:

Using content analysis, Olasehinde (2025) investigates the impact of adult education on community development, specifically in terms of improving employment prospects, encouraging social inclusion, and encouraging active citizenship. The study examines various adult education strategies and their effects on the general well-being of the community, both directly and indirectly. According to research, adult education can be a game-changer for long-term community development by tackling issues like poverty, social injustice, and economic stagnation.

Obi [10] investigated how adult education promotes community development in Rivers State's Oyigbo and Obio/Akpors. The study employed a descriptive survey design. 37,786 recipients of adult education programs made up the study's population. For the study, a sample of five percent of the population was used. 1770 members of the target population were selected as a sample. The study's sample was chosen using the proportionate sampling technique. The study employed a self-structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.71. The mean score was used to assess the gathered data. The study's conclusions demonstrated that, in both Oyigbo and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas, adult education significantly advances community development.

In a study of Akamkpa Local Government Area (LGA) of Cross River State, Nigeria, Ironbar and Anam [11] investigated the impact of adult literacy programs on socioeconomic growth. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data from 201 adult learners using a descriptive survey approach. included 402 adult students participating in literacy programs in the Akamkpa Local Government Area. To guarantee representativeness across all demographic categories, a sample of 201 respondents was chosen using a combination of stratified and basic random sampling procedures. A verified and structured questionnaire was used to gather data. Results show that adult literacy programs greatly improve community involvement, economic activity, and health awareness. However, obstacles like poor finance and infrastructure prevent programs from being as effective as they may be.

In their study of Akamkpa local government area of Cross River State, Ekpenyong and Ubah [12] examined how adult education contributes to sustainable community development. For the investigation, two research questions were developed. This study's design was a descriptive survey. The study's population consisted of 402 participants in the adult education program for sustainable community development in the study area. A sample size of 201 respondents was selected using stratified and basic random sampling techniques. A 10-item questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. It was verified by research specialists and assessed using Cronbach alpha statistics, yielding a reliability estimate of 0.87. Frequency and percentages were used in the analysis of the gathered data. The study's conclusions showed that in Cross River State's Akamkpa local government area, adult education fosters sustained community development.

### *Theoretical framework*

This study is anchored on the Social Capital Theory, supported by the Participatory Development Theory, to explain the activities of urban-based town unions and their role in community development in Cross River State.

#### Social Capital Theory:

The Social Capital Theory, as articulated by Bourdieu (1986) [13], Coleman (1988) [14], and Putnam (1993) [15], emphasizes the significance of social networks, trust, shared norms, and collective action in facilitating cooperation and achieving developmental goals. Social capital refers to the resources that individuals and groups can access through their social relationships, which enhance coordination, solidarity, and mutual support. Urban-based town unions constitute organized social networks of individuals who share a common place of origin but reside in urban centres. Through regular meetings, financial contributions, and shared cultural identity, these unions build trust and reciprocity among members. Such relationships represent bonding social capital, which strengthens internal cohesion, while their linkages with rural communities, local governments, and development agencies reflect bridging social capital [16].

In Cross River State, urban-based town unions mobilize financial resources, professional expertise, and social influence to initiate and support development projects in their communities of origin. These projects often include the construction of schools, health facilities, rural roads, water supply schemes, electrification projects, and scholarship programmes. Social Capital Theory therefore provides a strong explanation of how collective action and network-based resource mobilization by town unions contribute to community development outcomes.

#### Participatory Development Theory:

The Participatory Development Theory is associated with scholars such as Freire [17] and Chambers [18], who argue that development is most effective and sustainable when local people actively participate in decision-making processes. The theory emphasizes bottom-up development, where communities identify their needs, participate in planning and implementation, and take ownership of development initiatives.

Urban-based town unions function as platforms for participatory development by enabling members to deliberate on community challenges, prioritize development needs, mobilize resources, and monitor project execution. Despite their urban residence, union members maintain strong emotional and social ties with their rural communities, ensuring that development interventions reflect local priorities. This participatory process enhances accountability, community ownership, and sustainability of development projects.

#### Relevance of the theories to the study:

The integration of Social Capital Theory and Participatory Development Theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the activities of urban-based town unions and their contributions to community development in Cross River State. While Social Capital Theory explains how trust, networks, and collective action enable resource mobilization, Participatory Development Theory highlights the importance of inclusive decision-making and community involvement in sustaining development efforts. Together, these theories offer a robust analytical lens for understanding the role of urban-based town unions as key agents of grassroots development.

#### *Research gap*

From the empirical review, it was discovered that previous studies were carried on rural based community organizations or associations and international NGOs and not on urban-based organizations. Therefore, there is need to carry out a study on activities of town-based unions that could fill this gap.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The survey design method was used in the investigation. The survey design is appropriate for the study since it primarily uses questionnaires and interviews to obtain data and is highly helpful for opinion and attitude investigations. The study region was Northern Cross River State. Bekwarra, Obanliku, Obudu, Ogoja, and Yala Local Government Areas make up this group. The urban-based town union in Calabar had 1,846 members as of the 2023 register, with 1,381 men and 465 women. The distribution of the population by local government areas and gender shown in Table 1. For this investigation, the purposeful sampling strategy was used. According to Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim, and Ekuri (2004), this method involves a researcher using his or her discretion to select respondent samples depending on certain factors including accessibility and simplicity of data collection.

**Table 1: Distribution of population by Local Government Area and gender.**

Local Govt. Areas	Male	Female	Total
Bekwarra	196	88	284
Obanliku	290	105	395
Obudu	335	94	429
Ogoja	309	107	416
Yala	251	71	322
Total	1,381	465	1,846

[Source: Register of Urban-based Town Unions, Calabar]

Additionally, this approach guarantees that the sample contains elements pertinent to the investigation. This method was used to choose the accessible and pertinent components needed for the study as the sample. 600 respondents were chosen for the study based on this. 600 members, 440 of whom were men and 160 of whom were women, were chosen at random from urban town unions in each of the five Local Government Areas to make up the study's sample. Table 2 displays the sample distribution by gender and Local Government Areas.

**Table 2: Distribution of sample by Local Government Areas and gender.**

Local Govt. Areas	Male	Female	Total
Bekwarra	60	20	80
Obanliku	90	30	120
Obudu	105	45	150
Ogoja	110	40	150
Yala	75	25	100
Total	440	160	600

[Source: Field work, 2025]

The instrument used for data collection was a three-section questionnaire called the "Urban-based Town Union activities and Community Development Questionnaire" (UBTUCDQ). The four-point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, and disagree were used to grade the questionnaire. The following statistical methodology was used for data analysis and hypothesis testing:

Hypothesis 1:

There is no correlation between youth vocational skills acquisition training and community development in Northern senatorial district of Cross River State.

Independent variable: Youth vocational skills.

Dependent variable: Community development. Statistical tool: Pearson's product moment correlation.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no correlation between adult literacy education and community development in Northern senatorial district of Cross River State.

Independent variable: Adult literacy.

Dependent variable: Community development. Statistical tool: Pearson's product moment correlation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researchers present the result of data analysis, interpretation of the results as well as the discussion of the finding.

### *Presentation of Results*

**Table 3: Summary of Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (r) computation of the relationship between youth vocational skills acquisition training and community development.**

Variables	X	S.D.	E <sub>xy</sub>	r-cal	r-critical
Youth vocational skills	13.49	2.39	3447.99	0.205	0.088
Promotion of community development	20.90	2.79			

P < 0.05, df = 598

The result of the Pearson's product moment correlation in Table 3 shows a Pearson's product moment correlation calculated of 0.205 which indicates a positive correlation between youth vocational skills and community development in the Northern Senatorial district of Cross River State. This result implies that youth vocational skills promote community development in the Northern Senatorial district of Cross River State.

**Table 4: Summary of Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (r) computation of the relationship between adult literacy programme and community development in Northern senatorial district of Cross River State.**

Variables	X	S.D.	E <sub>xy</sub>	r-cal	r-critical
Adult literacy education	13.45	2.37	1887.60	0.285	0.088
Community development	20.90	2.79			

P < 0.05, df = 598

The result of the Pearson's product moment correlation in Table 4 shows a Pearson's product moment correlation calculated of 0.285 which indicates a positive correlation between adult literacy programme and community development in the Northern Senatorial district of Cross River State. This result implies that adult literacy programme promotes community development in the Northern Senatorial district of Cross River State.

### *Tests of hypotheses*

Hypothesis 1:

There is no correlation relationship between youth vocational skills acquisition training and community development in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State.

To test this hypothesis, Pearson's product moment correlation was used. Community development was the dependent variable while youth vocational skill was the independent

variable. The result of the Pearson's product moment correlation in Table 4 shows a Pearson's product moment correlation calculated of 0.205 which indicates a positive correlation between youth vocational skills and community development in the Northern Senatorial district of Cross River State.

Thus, we reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no correlation relationship between youth vocational skills acquisition training and community development in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State and conclude that there is a correlation relationship between youth vocational skills acquisition training and community development in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no correlation between adult literacy programme and community development in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State. To test this hypothesis, Pearson's product moment correlation was used. Community development was the dependent variable while adult literacy education was the independent variable.

The result of the Pearson's product moment correlation in Table 4 shows a Pearson's product moment correlation calculated of 0.285 which indicates a positive correlation between adult literacy programme and community development in the Northern Senatorial district of Cross River State. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no correlation relationship between adult literacy programme and community development in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State and conclude that there is a correlation relationship between adult literacy programme and community development in the Northern senatorial district of Cross River State.

### *Discussion of Findings*

Youth vocational skill acquisition training and community development:

The result of the finding supports the finding of Kazomi (2007) who found out that there is a relationship between vocational skills training and community development. He pointed out that vocational training and skill development are tools that improve the productivity of the labour force of any society or community. The result of this study was also in agreement with the view of Hilson (2010) who asserted that vocational education and skill training are the most important factors for community growth. He noted that both vocational training and skill development are the most important factors of human capital development of any community.

The result of this study also corroborates the opinions of Becker (2003) and Both and Snower (2005) who stated that there is a correlation between youth vocational skill and community development. They meted that youth vocational skills make human to be more productive and increase their coming which help in expansion of their economy.

Adult literacy education and community development:

The finding reinforces the findings of Duke (1995) and Nicholson (1997) who asserted that literacy is a prerequisite for economic development. It reduces exploitation and poverty, a contact point for the achievement of liberation and also abolishes oppression.

Literacy is the basic tool needed for improving the day-to-day activities. The knowledge of arithmetic obtained in school help people in carrying out their business. The result of this finding is also in agreement with views of development in Nigeria (DIN), (2001) that basic literacy education can help to prevent poverty, sickness and conflict. Basic education helps

individual reaches their full potential as productive members of the society. The result of this finding also supports the opinions of Eiiiberi (2012) who asserted that literacy is an essential tool for community development.

## CONCLUSION

The activities of urban-based town union work through people centered modes of development such as availability of microfinance, provision of food, youth empowerment skills, adult literacy programmes and provision of portable water have brought about rural change through increase in income, increase in water supply, improvement in health nutrition and literacy status of the rural populace. Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that the activities of town unions in terms of youth vocational skills are significantly related to community development in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State. Also, adult literacy has a significant relationship with community development in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State.

*Based on findings the recommendations were:*

- Community members and youths should be trained on vocational skills for empowerment and self-reliance.
- Community leaders and officers should create more awareness on the benefits of adult literacy programmes to members of the community.
- Government should establish banks and financial institutions in the rural communities to enable members have access to credit facilities to empower themselves.
- Urban-based town union should carryout enlightenment campaign on their developmental activities.

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