

Obubra Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: An Assessment of the Economic Development of a Local Government Area in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper carried out an empirical investigation into the state of economic development of Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria, right from inception in 1902 to date. Economic development was examined from the perspective of poverty reduction, human and infrastructural development. The paper then adopted a descriptive approach and empirically analyzed stylized facts captured in human development index (HDI), Human Poverty Index (HPI) as well as field surveys and personal interviews. The findings showed that the pace of economic development in Obubra is rather slow and not commensurate with the age of the Local Government Area. The paper therefore drew agenda to serve as a road map for sustainable development of Obubra in the future, as follows: full utilization of natural resources for economic development; adoption of sound educational policy; provision of basic infrastructural facilities; fostering economic empowerment/social inclusion and imbibing the principles of environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Obubra; Economic Development; Local Government Area; Cross River State; Nigeria; level of Poverty and Human Development.

Jel Classification Codes: O10, O12, O13, O15 and O18.

1. Introduction

One of the paramount ideas behind local government creation in Nigeria, as in other parts of the World is to bring development closer to the people at the grass root. It was as a result of this, Obubra was established as a British colonial district in 1902 and has since undergone several metamorphoses in terms of geography and administrative nomenclature to the extent that from 1976 to date, it became known as "Obubra Local Government Area" following the local government reforms of 1976 in Nigeria. Today, Obubra is one of the oldest local government areas in Nigeria (Ogwua, 2007). It lies between latitude 4° 45' and 6° 15' North of Equator and longitude 8° 12' East of Greenwich Meridian. It is bounded in the north by Yala and Ikom Local government areas, in the south by Yakurr local government area and in the west by Ebonyi state. The present day Obubra as a geo-political entity covers an area of 1115 km² with a population of 172,543 people, as at 2006 census (National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2006). It is situated in the central senatorial district of Cross River State of Nigeria and has its headquarters at Obubra. There are eleven political council wards in the local government area, namely: Ababene, Ofat, Ofodua, Ovonum, Apiapum, Iyamoyong, Ochon, Obubra Urban, Ofumbongha/Yala, Osopong I, and Osopong II.

At inception, its jurisdiction extended to present-day Biase, Akamkpa, Abi and Yakurr as well as Ikom and Ogoja local government areas. But today, greater proportions of these areas have been excised from Obubra leaving a seemingly mono-cultural group of people of Mbembe descent as well as other minority ethnic nationalities like Yala (Nkum), Ekuri, Isobo and Izzi speaking people. The Mbembe speaking people who constitute the majority consist of the following traditional clans: Adun, Okum, Osopong and Ofumbongha. In concrete terms, Obubra could be best described as having the characteristics of an ethnic plural society.

Given the early contact Obubra had with the Europeans (the British) and the advantage of being made the headquarters of Cross River Division by the British in September 1902, the point of departure of this paper is to assess the extent of economic development of the area over the years and draw agenda for the future. To achieve this objective, the paper is organized in the following sequence: section 1 has been the introduction; section 2 reviews related literature on economic activities in Obubra; section 3 examines the general economic status of Obubra and presents an evaluation of the economic score card of the local government area via descriptive analysis of stylized facts. In section 4, the paper draws agenda for the future while section 5 summarizes and concludes the paper.

2. Literature Review

There is paucity of empirical literature on economic development of Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State. The few studies available in the literature concentrate on economic activities related to farming, the major occupation in the area, without examining exhaustively the general economic status of Obubra thus creating a gap in the literature. For example, Enang (2013) investigated the relationship between growth in

farming population and land depletion and deforestation in rural communities in the context of Nigerian society using Obubra Local Government Area in Cross River State as a case study. Adopting regression analysis, his findings revealed that Obubra Local Government Area is still lagging in agricultural transformation and forest preservation because of the growth of farming population. He recommended the pursuit of new agricultural techniques for rural farmers by policy makers.

In a related development, Mbina (2014) examined the challenges before the Cross River State anti-deforestation Commission vis-à-vis the traditional farming methods in Obubra Local Government Area (LGA). His findings showed that in Obubra LGA, there has been an alarming rate of deforestation for subsistence farming and other means of economic survival. He recommended that government should put in place proper enforcement mechanism to enforce anti-deforestation legislations and the local communities should be properly educated on the danger posed by poor farming methods on the environment.

Again, Adinya, Angba, Edet, Isek and Iton (2011) analyzed the adoption of improved cassava technologies as a strategy for rural transformation in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State. They collected data from one hundred and twenty improved cassava farmers from the local government area and employed ordinary least squares regression analysis. Their findings showed that education, agricultural extension visit, effective agricultural communication strategy and adoption of improved technologies have positive influence on output of improved cassava production. Adinya et al (2011) therefore recommended that government should post more extension agents to the study area (Obubra) since their visit/training of cassava farmers on adoption of new technology in cassava production has positive influence on output of improved cassava.

In a related study, Nandi (2011) examined the economics of cassava production in Obubra Local Government Area using multistage random sampling technique to select a sample size of 156 respondents for the study. He then used descriptive statistics in the data analysis and found out that farmers were inefficient in their resource use. He recommended that for farmers to boost their productivity, they should employ more of the productive resources such as improved varieties and labour.

Furthermore, Oniah, Kuye and Idiong (2008) investigated the allocative efficiency of resources used in small scale swamp rice production in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Questionnaires and personal interviews were administered and conducted on randomly selected two hundred small scale swamp rice farmers to gather information on their inputs and output paddy rice. A rice production function was specified and estimated using the ordinary least squares estimation technique. The results revealed that the farmers were inefficient in resource use allocation and the resources were underutilized. For farmers to increase paddy rice output in the area, the authors suggested that they should employ more of the productive resources.

Moreover, Angba and Itari (2012) examined the factors that influence farmers' participation in social organizations that foster community development in Obubra Local government area of Cross River State. They used multistage random sampling technique and selected five out of 27 clans, two local organizations from the five clans selected and six members from each of the two organizations, resulting in a total of 60 respondents. Their findings showed that the members join local organizations basically for economic benefits and farm supports. However, the authors maintained that the expected economic benefits for members was not very certain due to mutual distrust and lack of confidence in the leadership of the organizations. They therefore recommended that organizational environment that would motivate effective participation should be encouraged by ensuring due enforcement of organization's code of conduct, rules and regulations.

Ogwa (2007) adopted an historical approach and chronicled events and activities in Obubra as far back as the colonial period in what may be termed a "Small Encyclopedia" of Obubra. This seemingly compendium of information about Obubra, like other studies earlier reviewed, didn't provide a detailed, holistic and comprehensive analysis of the economic status of Obubra's development as a local government area over the years. A lacuna is thus created in the literature which this paper is set to fill.

3. Overview of the General Economic Status of Obubra

Strengthening the economic capacity of a local or regional community to make optimal use of existing and potential characteristics of the area is a sine qua non for rapid economic development of the area in question (The Hague Academy for local governance, 2014). These characteristics are defined by the local or regional community's occupation, extent of capacity building, and natural resources/endowment as well as an enabling macro-economic environment. To this end, an over view of these characteristics becomes germane to put the issues related to the economic status of Obubra in the right perspective.

(i) Occupation: A greater proportion of the population of the Obubra people is engaged in agriculture to eke out a living, such as farming and fishing, while others are engaged in petty trading, civil/public service and self-employment. The area is blessed with large and fertile arable land with a favourable climate which supports the

growth of food and cash crops. The major food crops produced in the area are yam, cassava, rice, cocoyam, maize, groundnut, sugarcane, melon, vegetables etc. Cash crops produced in the area are cocoa, palm produce, rubber, coffee etc. Though agriculture in Obubra is still practiced at subsistence level, the crops are more often than not produced in commercial quantity. The establishment of small and medium scale cassava and rice processing industries in the area is an eloquent testimony to the fact that most of these food crops are produced in commercial quantity. Equally, to boost the production of cash crops in the area, agricultural projects like Ochon Oil Palm Nursery, Obrenyi Cocoa Estate and other privately owned oil palm estates are established in the area.

(ii) Natural Resources/Endowments: Obubra is one of the most blessed local government areas in Cross River State in terms of natural resources/endowments. These resources among others include forest resources which are of tremendous economic importance. Such forest resources include different species of trees, like Iroko, Mahogany, Gmelina, Obeche, Opepe, Cedar etc. These species of wood used in the building and construction industry do not only serve local interest but are also supplied to neighbouring states like Benue, Ebonyi, Akwa Ibom, Enugu and Abia states (Ogwa, 2007). In addition to the forest resources, the local government is endowed with mineral resources like lead ore (found at Eja and Ogurude), salt deposit (found at Ibine-Ababene, near former campus of School of Agriculture, Iyamitet), sand and gravel (sand bank stretch from Ogurude end of Cross River through Apiapum, Ofatura, Ovonum up to Adun beach; gravel is found along Apiapum-Obubra road and other places in Obubra). The list is endless. However, some of these mineral deposits are yet to be fully exploited.

(iii) Capacity Building: Having an early advantage of contact with the Europeans, a number of educational institutions at all levels have been established in Obubra. For example, the first primary school, PCN Primary School Apiapum, was established in 1920 while the first secondary school, St. Brendan Secondary School Iyamoyong was established in 1961 (Ogwa, 2007). Obubra also boasts of tertiary institutions like Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH) Faculty of Agriculture located at Ovonum and other privately owned tertiary institutions like Elder Oyama Memorial College of Education Ofat. Today, Obubra can boast of over 73 primary schools and over 20 secondary schools turning out a reasonable number of school leavers and graduates yearly (Ogwa, 2007).

(iv) Enabling Macroeconomic Environment: This encompasses a peaceful and violence free environment and growth-supporting infrastructural facilities in terms of good and motor able roads, water ways and electricity supply as well as financial institutions. Obubra is relatively peaceful to support any form of investment. In terms of electricity supply, recent surveys suggest that a number of communities have been electrified over the years while many are still left without electricity and in terms of road network, very few roads in Obubra are tarred while majority of others are not tarred. Apart from the Ikom-Calabar Highway which passes through Obubra in a north-southerly direction, Apiapum-Obubra Road and Iyamoyong-Iyamitet road that are tarred, all the rest of the roads are untarred. There is also paucity of financial institutions in the local government area. The functional financial institutions are: First Bank Plc. Mile 1, Obubra; Polical Community Bank CRUTECH, Ovonum; Nigerian Agricultural cooperative and Rural Development Bank, Apiapum and Ekondo Microfinance Bank Ofatura.

3.1. Analytical Methodology:

The study adopts a descriptive approach and empirically analyzes stylized facts on socio-economic indices of development in the study area such as human development index (HDI), human poverty index (HPI) as well as field surveys and personal interviews.

3.2. Assessment of the Economic Score Card:

Given the early contact Obubra had with the Europeans, coupled with the luck of being made the administrative headquarters of a large political district which confers on it today as one of the oldest local government areas in Nigeria, one would have thought that the state of economic development in Obubra would have been unparalleled in the comity of local government areas in Cross River State, Nigeria. This is however not the case, rather, it is a tale of palpable economic woes, judging from the following socio-economic indicators:

Level of Poverty: Poverty level in Obubra is high judging from the living conditions of the people. Nigeria has been adjudged one of the poorest countries on the face of the earth despite having one of the World's highest economic growth rates averaging 7.4 per cent over the last ten years and numerous natural resources including oil, about 70 per cent of the people in Nigeria live below the international poverty line of \$1.25 per day (Daily Independent 2012, June 18). Reflecting the high incidence of poverty at the national level, the National Bureau of Statistics (2010) reports that incidence of poverty in Cross River State has increased since 1980. While poverty incidence was 10.2 per cent in 1980, it rose to 41.9 per cent in 1985 and in 1992 it stood at 45.5 per cent and rose further to 66.9 per cent in 1996 before falling to 41.6 per cent in 2004 and by 2010 poverty incidence

increased further to 52.9 per cent. In the same vein, despite the availability of cheap and abundant labour and large and fertile arable land, coupled with numerous natural resources a greater percentage of the Obubra people are poor as underscored by the analysis of Human Development Index (HDI) and Human Poverty Index (HPI).

Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic used to rank countries/regions into four tiers of human development such as life expectancy at birth, mean year of schooling, expected year of schooling and gross national income per capita. In the context of this paper, HDI measures the average achievements in Obubra Local Government Area vis-a-vis the rest of the other Local Government Areas of Cross River State in 3 basic dimensions of human development such as: (i) a long and healthy life as measured by life expectancy at birth (ii) Knowledge, as measured by the adult literacy rate (with two thirds weight) and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (with one third weight) (iii) a decent standard of living, as measured by GDP per capita (PPP US \$). Performance in each dimension is expressed as a value between 0 and 1 while range of values used in ranking the HDI are categorized into high range (0.463 - 0.579), medium range (0.462 – 0.347) and low range (0.346 – 0.229) (Niger Delta Human Development Report, 2006). Apart from the analysis of human development index of Obubra, the HDI of other Local Government Areas in Cross River State is evaluated as well. Evaluation of HDI of other Local Government Areas in Cross River State in this paper is necessary for purposes of comparison.

Table 3.1 presents the HDI of the 18 Local Government Areas of Cross River State.

Table 3.1: HDI by Local Government Areas in Cross River State

LGA	Life Expectancy Index	Educational Index	GDP Index	HDI	Rank
Abi	0.475	0.333	0.408	0.405	11 th
Akamkpa	0.483	0.332	0.389	0.402	13 th
Akpabuyo	0.475	0.314	0.405	0.398	14 th
Bakassi	0.392	0.280	0.409	0.360	17 th
Bekwara	0.408	0.302	0.389	0.366	16 th
Biase	0.425	0.351	0.386	0.387	15 th
Boki	0.450	0.374	0.416	0.413	9 th
Calabar Mun.	0.575	0.443	0.484	0.501	1 st
Calabar south	0.575	0.430	0.471	0.492	2 nd
Etung	0.458	0.399	0.445	0.434	7 th
Ikom	0.483	0.385	0.442	0.437	6 th
Obanliku	0.500	0.349	0.377	0.409	10 th
Obubra	0.517	0.359	0.483	0.453	3 rd
Obudu	0.558	0.349	0.429	0.446	5 th
Odukpani	0.475	0.335	0.431	0.414	8 th
Ogoja	0.550	0.357	0.442	0.450	4 th
Yakurr	0.442	0.372	0.399	0.404	12 th
Yala	0.442	0.383	0.218	0.347	18 th

Source: Adapted from Niger Delta Development Report (2006).

From table 3.1, the HDI of Obubra stood at 0.453 ranking Obubra 3rd out of the 18 local government areas of the State, while Calabar Municipality and Calabar South with HDI scores of 0.501 and 0.492 are ranked 1st and 2nd respectively. Obubra's 3rd position in the HDI ranking notwithstanding, judging from the categorization according to range, the Local Government Area falls in the medium range. This is not very healthy for a Local Government Area that is acclaimed to be one of the oldest in Cross River State and indeed Nigeria. Obubra should have fallen in the high range in the HDI categorization. While the HDI measures average achievement, HPI measures deprivations in the three basic dimensions of human development captured in the HDI namely: (i) a long and healthy life – vulnerability to death at a relatively early age as measured by the probability at birth of not surviving to age 40. (ii) knowledge – exclusion from the World of reading and communication, as measured by the adult illiteracy rate and (iii) a decent standard of living – lack of access to overall economic provisioning, as measured by the percentage of the population not using improved water sources and the percentage of children under five who are under weight. The indicators in each of the three measures of deprivations in the HPI are normalized between 0 and 100 (i.e., they are expressed as a percentage) and the categorization according to range is as follows: 14.03 – 20.594 (high range), 20.595 – 27.158 (medium range) and 27.159 – 33.722 (low range) (Niger Delta Development Report, 2006). Table 3.2 shows the HPI for the 18 local government areas of Cross River State.

Table 3.2: HPI Index and Dimensions for Local Government Areas in Cross River State

LGA	Probability at birth of not surviving to age 40	Adult illiteracy Rate	Unweighted	HPI
Abi	32.40	23.50	27.38	28.23
Akamkpa	17.40	23.00	29.93	24.52
Akpabuyo	26.20	18.50	23.15	23.05
Bakassi	19.05	15.50	23.43	19.86
Bekwara	14.70	16.00	23.43	18.86
Biase	20.55	21.50	25.63	22.78
Boki	16.20	25.50	19.30	21.06
Calabar Mun.	12.35	34.00	27.05	27.29
Calabar South	13.65	32.50	22.90	25.35
Etung	16.90	28.25	20.75	22.96
Ikom	21.80	28.00	24.85	25.14
Obanliku	21.85	22.50	20.93	21.78
Obubra	19.65	24.00	23.20	22.44
Obudu	19.35	25.50	22.00	22.57
Odukpani	15.25	23.50	24.63	21.89
Ogoja	22.47	26.50	22.20	23.89
Yakurr	22.00	26.50	20.40	23.26
Yala	20.90	26.50	22.10	23.42

Note: Unweighted = unweighted average of population not using improved water sources and underweight children under age five.

Source: Adapted from Niger Delta Development Report (2006).

Again, from table 3.2, Obubra Local Government Area with a human poverty index score of 22.44 per cent is ranked under the medium range while relatively newly created local government areas like Bekwara and Bakassi with HPI scores of 18.86 and 19.86 respectively, are ranked under the high range. This is indeed appalling for a local government area that is one of the oldest in Nigeria. From the analytical stand point of the individual indicators of the HPI, Obubra's performance is not very impressive. For example, in terms of vulnerability to death at a relatively early age, Obubra recorded a high probability, trailing behind local government areas like Calabar Municipality, Calabar south, Bekwara, Odukpani, Boki, Etung, Akamkpa and Obudu with relatively low probability scores (table 3.2). Equally, Obubra's performance in adult illiteracy rate and the percentage of the population deprived from using improved water sources as well as underweight children under age five indicators is not encouraging. Generally table 3.2 depicts high level of deprivations in majority of the local government areas analyzed, indicating the presence of high incidence of poverty in Obubra, Cross River State, as in the case of the entire country – Nigeria.

Again in a field survey conducted by Earthguards Limited: Sustainable Development Consultants, in 2009, the high poverty level in Obubra was reaffirmed. According to the survey, the proportion of the people on N0 - N50, 000 annual income was 48.8 per cent and 20.4 percent of the people were on annual income of N51,000 – N100,000 while only 3 per cent of the people earned annual income of N500,000 and above (table 3.3). The HDI and the HPI analyzed above, may not be very appropriate to adequately evaluate the level of economic development of Obubra Local Government Area as they fail to capture most of the things badly needed in Obubra which serve as major economic development indices, such as safe drinking water, electricity, good roads, appropriate waste management and environmental sustainability. With this well-known limitation of the HDI, it will therefore be necessary to look beyond HDI and HPI for effective assessment of the economic status of Obubra Local Government Area. In this respect, the paper also adopts personal interviews and field surveys in its analysis to gather information on the indices not captured by the HDI and HPI.

Access to Safe Drinking Water: Access to safe drinking water is another socio-economic indicator which influences the health and economic wellbeing of a people. This indicator was not captured by the HDI and its impact in the HPI was not clearly seen as it was taken as a composite index of unweighted average population not using improved water sources and underweight children under age five (table 3.2). Access to safe drinking water is defined here as “the availability of portable water of at least 30 litres per person per day, located within a maximum of 250-500 metres from the household”. It has to do with improved water sources and also includes a wide range of other aspects such as regularity, sufficiency, affordability, quality and safety (Ndiyo, Okon & Olumide, 2013).

Lack of safe drinking water has health implications on the people. They are prone to water borne diseases like guinea worm infestation, which was the fate of majority of Obubra people before 2006 when

massive interventions and awareness on the essence of safe water supply in the endemic communities in the local government area were intensified. Apart from the health implications, lack of adequate water infrastructure inhibits commercial and industrial development of an area. Over 80 per cent of the people of Obubra depend on other sources of unsafe drinking water like ponds, streams, and River. Specifically, 78.1 per cent of the people depend on river water, 9 per cent depend on pond/stream and 7.5 per cent rely on commercial borehole while 1 per cent of the people use private borehole (table 3.3). Given this scenario, the state of economic underdevelopment in Obubra is not surprising.

Table 3.3: Perception of Socio – Economic indicators by Respondents in Obubra Local Government Area.

Indicator	Category	Percentage (%)
Highest Education	• None	25.3
	• FSLC	28.4
	• WASC/SSC	12.9
	• HND/DEGREE	5.0
Annual Income	• N0 - N50,000	48.8
	• N51,000 – N100,000	20.4
	• N101,000 – N500,000	16.9
	• Above N500,000	3.0
Source of Energy	• Electricity	37.3
	• Private Generator	14.0
	• Hurricane Lamp	48.7
Cooking Fuel	• Kerosene	28.0
	• Fire wood	70.0
Sources of Water	• River	78.1
	• Pond/Stream	9.0
	• Borehole (commercial)	7.5
	• Borehole (private)	1.0
<u>Waste Management:</u> Type of toilet	• Pit	68.0
	• Bush	20.0
Waste Disposal	• Water closet	12.0
	• Organized collection	0.0
	• Open dump	40.0
	• Burning	30.0

Source: Adapted from Earthguards Limited Field work (2009).

Capacity Building: Table 3.2 indicates that about 24 per cent of the people in Obubra are illiterates. This is further corroborated by the Earthguards' survey as presented in table 3.3, where 25.3 per cent of the people never went to school and hence have no educational qualification. The table also shows that 28.4 per cent of the population hold the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC), 12.9 per cent hold the West African School Certificate/Senior Secondary School Certificate (WASC/SSC) while only 5 per cent hold Higher National Diploma (HND)/Degree. Education and entrepreneurial skill acquisition are cardinal for local, regional or national transformation. Given this low level of educational attainment in Obubra it becomes difficult to fully explore and exploit the natural/mineral resources in Obubra for rapid economic transformation of the area. This perhaps may be one of the reasons for the slow pace of economic development in Obubra. Revelations also arising from personal interviews with a cross section of the Obubra people indicate that majority of the youth in the local government area indulge in social vices like cultism, political thuggery and gangsterism instead of embracing education. This may have also accounted for the educational backwardness of the area.

Electricity Supply: It is regrettable that right into the 21st century, many communities in Obubra are yet to be electrified. Even those electrified have to grapple with the problem of epileptic power supply which cannot support any meaningful economic growth. Businessmen and other investors in Obubra have to resort to other alternative sources of power supply like generators because of the erratic power supply in the area, which makes the cost of doing business in Obubra very high and by extension adversely affects economic growth and development. For example, table 3.3 shows that only 37.3 per cent of the population in Obubra have access to public power supply, 14 per cent use private generators while the rest of the people with a frequency of 48.7 per cent resort to the use of hurricane lamps as alternative source of energy.

In terms of energy used for cooking, fire wood is mostly used accounting for about 70 per cent frequency use (table 3.3). The predominant use of fire wood and logging of the different species of trees have

had adverse effects on the forest resources in the study area. More so, the intensity in the use of fire wood as a source of energy for cooking is borne out of the fact that the people are predominantly subsistence farmers. These practices have caused an alarming rate of deforestation in Obubra, thus painting a dismal picture of environmental sustainability of the local government area. These findings are consistent with the findings of Enang (2013) and Mbina (2014) both of who maintained that there has been an alarming rate of deforestation in Obubra as a result of subsistence farming and other means of economic survival.

Waste Management: From personal interviews conducted, coupled with Earthguards Limited (2009) Survey, it was revealed that waste generated in the study area is mainly domestic but lacks good waste management practices. Waste is mostly disposed in bush via open dump. In terms of defecation, pit toilet is mostly used accounting for about 68 per cent frequency and bush accounts for 20 per cent while water closet accounts for only 12 per cent (table 3.3). This finding brings to the fore the need to emphasize the importance of sanitation and personal hygiene since a society that lacks these attributes is prone to some communicable diseases with adverse effects on the economic wellbeing of the people. "Health", they say is "wealth".

Road Transportation: Road transportation in Obubra is one of the worst in the country. Again, from the researcher's personal interviews with a cross section of the people, only three roads are tarred in Obubra, all the rest are untarred and mostly not motorable especially in the rainy season. The tarred roads are Ikom-Calabar highway, Apiapum-Obubra Road and Iyamoyong-Iyamitet Road. The untarred roads are Ofat-Ababene-Ovokwua Road, Ababene-Arobom-Obubema Road, Ofodua-Ahaha Road, Ohana-Ogambang-Obrenyi Road, Ochon-Edondon-Okokori Road, Ochon-Isabang Road, Obubra-Ofumbongha-Obukpa-Ofonatan Road, Obubra-Ofumbongha-Nkum/Yala-Oyen Okpon-Ochon Road. All these untarred roads inhibit the movement of goods and persons and by extension economic activities in Obubra.

Financial Institutions: The role of financial institutions in the economic development process of an area cannot be over emphasized. Financial institutions constitute the conduit through which economic activities flow. Financial institutions in Obubra are grossly inadequate. As a result of this inadequacy, businessmen find it difficult to access credit facilities to startup businesses and to expand existing ones. Paucity of financial institutions coupled with low savings negatively affect economic growth in Obubra.

Foreign Control of The Economy: Arising from personal interviews in the course of this research, it was discovered that the Obubra economy is mostly controlled by foreigners (stranger elements). Many major businesses in Obubra are owned and controlled by non-indigenes with profits being repatriated elsewhere rather than retained and re-invested in Obubra. This has also accounted for the economic backwardness of Obubra.

4. Agenda for the Future:

Prosperity of Obubra in the 21st century will be dependent on creating and maintaining a sustainable standard of living and a high quality of life for the people. It is therefore imperative to address these observed developmental anomalies with a view to re-shaping, re-positioning re-focusing the destiny of Obubra to greatness. To accomplish this, the paper puts forth the following agenda for the future.

Full Utilization of Natural Resources: A place endowed with natural resources without being fully harnessed and exploited can never achieve economic growth and development. Efforts should be made to fully take advantage of the natural resources abound in Obubra and harness them for economic development.

Sound Educational Policy: To build the required capacity needed to drive the economy and fully harness and utilize Obubra's natural endowment, a sound educational policy must be put in place to develop the abilities, skills and mental horizons of the people. The present situation whereby the youth in the local government area indulge in social vices like cultism, gangsterism and political thuggery instead of embracing education does not augur well for human development. To this end, the government has a responsibility for subsidizing education by floating bursary and scholarship schemes, enacting bye-laws to make basic education at the primary and secondary school levels free and compulsory, resuscitate the adult education scheme for the adult illiterates in Obubra and encourage in-service training for the working class to build their capacity.

Provision of Basic Infrastructural Facilities: The government has a responsibility to maximize the welfare of the people by providing growth supporting infrastructure like good and motorable roads, efficient and dependable electricity and safe drinking water. Provision of these infrastructural facilities in Obubra will stimulate economic activities and through the multiplier effect creates employment and means of livelihood in Obubra. Provision of stable electricity for example will lead to springing up of small and medium scale enterprises like barbing salons, hair dressing salons welding businesses and photocopying business centres.

Economic Empowerment/Social Inclusion: It is quite obvious that there exists a positive correlation between economic empowerment and political empowerment. In most cases, economic empowerment flows from political empowerment. A major concern in Obubra is the long standing exclusion of the local government area from the mainstream of Cross River State's socio-economic and political activities. Obubra has been seriously marginalized over the years. The Obubra people should be economically empowered to take charge of their

economy and drive the economic development of their local government area. While foreign presence is necessary for the growth and development of an economy, the present situation whereby a greater percentage of the Obubra economy is controlled by foreigners will not engender an accelerated and sustainable economic development of Obubra since in most cases profits are repatriated elsewhere. This stance however, is not an advocate for xenophobia. To promote social inclusion and make the Obubra people take full control of their economy, government should strive hard to:

- (i) employ Obubra people into the public and civil service
- (ii) award contracts to Obubra sons and daughters and make prompt payments
- (iii) Give political appointments to qualified Obubra sons and daughters.

In a nutshell, achievement of social inclusion for Obubra people will be predicated on empowerment of the socially, politically and economically marginalized people of Obubra, stronger social institutions and infrastructure.

Environmental Sustainability: Economic development is sustainable if it does not only meet the current needs of the people and compromise their future needs. Promoting environmental sustainability is necessary to preserve the means of the people's livelihoods. The mainstreaming of environmental sustainability into all development activities must be given impetus by taking some proactive steps like conservation of natural resources, achievement of adequate targets for safe drinking water and maintenance of soil fertility. All these should be given backing by strong enforcement of environmental legislations and standards, in line with the recommendations of Mbina (2014).

5. Summary and Conclusion

The paper carried an empirical investigation into the state of economic development of Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria, right from inception in 1902 to date. The findings showed that the pace of economic development in Obubra is rather slow and not commensurate with the age of the Local Government Area, after analyzing basic socio-economic indicators in the study area. The paper therefore drew agenda to serve as a road map for sustainable development of Obubra in the future.

As a local government area, Obubra falls in the third tier of government in Nigeria which is the closest to the people at the grass root. The essence of local governance principally, is to drive development to the rural areas. This can only be achieved if local governance is effective to guide the flow of developmental resources at that level and be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of local governance in most local government areas in Nigeria including Obubra, leaves much to be desired and poses an issue of serious concern. If the principal objective of local government creation is to foster rapid economic development and prosperity of the area, then the economic performances of Obubra in juxtaposition with the objectives of its creation presents a case of gross economic despondency, making the creation of Obubra as a local government area an exercise in futility.

Despite the current state of economic despondency in Obubra, the paper is however optimistic that there are bright prospects in future especially if the set agenda above are vigorously and religiously pursued. Obubra will take its rightful place in the comity of local government areas in Nigeria.

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