

## **An Analysis of Strategies of Urban and Rural Community Associations in Executing Projects in Mezam Division, Cameroon**

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### *Abstract*

*This study aimed to analyze the strategies of urban and rural community associations in executing projects in the Mezam Division. Primary data sources included the use of structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and observation, administered to 571 participants by simple random sampling technique. Secondary data sources included published and unpublished materials. Chi-square distribution, frequency tables, and percentages were used in data analysis. Results on strategies revealed that involving other CAs in executing projects (47.6%) in the urban agree and (39.3%) in rural communities disagree, involving the community (39.2%) in the urban disagree and (38.8%) in rural communities agree, involving the government (43.3%) in urban communities disagree and (63.5%) in rural communities agree. To conclude, raising awareness of members and the community on the need to participate in executing projects as a strategy for community associations will lead to sustainable project execution.*

**Keywords:** *Associations, Cameroon, Community, Execution, Mezam Division, Projects, Strategies, Urban and Rural.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Community participation (Busari-Akinbode & Olusegun, 2020), or the full commitment of community members in deliberating and directing community affairs, is a major strategy of urban and rural community associations (CAs), use in executing collective interest projects for the community's good. These strategies are a means of improving the well-being of the inhabitants of a neighbourhood because the government failed successfully (Yonghabi, 2022) to provide for the people's felt needs. So, community members, through participatory democracy (Lovan *et al.*, 2017), could organize themselves into groups (community associations) in urban and rural communities, with the primary goal of meeting up with other areas of social development challenges. Community associations (CAs) are non-governmental and nonprofit associations (Bromley & Meyer, 2017), made up of community members who usually come together and deliberate over community affairs such as village development associations (VDA), social clubs, age grades, service organizations, youth groups, sports groups, common initiative groups and women's groups amongst others. These associations execute their functions within a specific community or geographical area (Wilkinson, 2023), having a common interest in addressing local needs and improving the well-being of its residents. The term CAs have often been used interchangeably (Bauwens *et al.*, 2022), as common interest groups (Busari-Akinbode & Olusegun, 2020), self-help groups (Yntiso, 2015; Borkman, 2020), town unions (Amadi & Olewe, 2023; Chukwu, 2024) and development associations.

Community associations have been in existence in Cameroon for decades, but became vocal only in the early 1990s, guided by Law No .90/053 of 19 December 1990, governing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Nsah, 2021), which was later revised in 1999, with Law No. 99/014 of December 22, 1999 (Abia *et al.*, 2016), replacing the freedom of associations in Cameroon (Naseri, 2021). Many community associations exist in urban and rural communities

in Cameroon, but some are operating illegally due to challenges emanating from the law. Through this law, members of these non-political (Benjamin Esone, 2020) associations could come together and organize themselves (Fokwa, 2019) to discuss areas of intervention through project execution for the well-being of the community. All members at home and abroad are concerned and actively participate through free labour supply for communal works, and “free will” (Zubair, 2022) contributions in kind and cash (Chinkonda, 2012). These strategies have yielded successful results in most instances in the Mezam Division in areas like rendering free labour and services, local building materials, financial donations, and entertainment and attending training seminars and workshops to acquire knowledge on mobilizing resources (Ngwa & Wanie, 2022) as well as managing the execution of community projects. These associations have been making gestures towards school resumption, encouraging and sensitizing pupils and students on the importance of children’s education, and offering school materials and scholarships to meritorious sons and daughters of the community. Community associations are acting as a force in spearheading (Ekwale, 2014) and overcoming social development challenges at the community level through the active mobilization of residents.

Despite the existence of CAs in Mezam Division, development problems ranging from health (Ngwa *et al.*, 2023), education (Ngwa & Wanie, 2022), water scarcity and shortages (Mbangari and Fouepe, 2021; Awazi, 2022), inadequate electricity supply (Ngwa & Wanie, 2022; Ngwa *et al.*, 2023), security challenges (Bih, 2022), environmental issues (Nfor *et al.*, 2019), to infrastructural challenges (Ncube & Leyeka, 2017), persist across various communities in both urban and rural areas in the Mezam Division. Participatory theory is appropriate in this study because it emphasizes the need for community engagement and commitment of all individuals to participate in successful community project execution as a reliable strategy for urban and rural CAs in the Mezam Division. This paper attempts to address the following questions: How do these urban and rural CAs identify projects? Is there networking among urban and rural CAs? What are the strategies used by urban and rural CAs in executing projects? What are the strengths and weaknesses of urban and rural CAs? How do these urban and rural CAs source for funds? What suggestions can we put in place to improve these strategies? Following from the background of this study is the methodology adopted, results and discussion and the conclusion.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Study Area

Mezam Division is found in the western highlands (Ngwa *et al.*, 2023) of the Northwest Region of Cameroon (Tangang, 2020), situated approximately at latitudes 5°40`N and 7° 50`N of the equator (Ngwa *et al.*, 2023), longitudes 09°8`09°8`E and 11° 51`51`E of Greenwich Meridian (Ndenecho & AKum, 2009). It has a surface area of about 1,841.45 km<sup>2</sup> (Ngwa & Wanie, 2022) and an estimated population of about 850,000 inhabitants (Ekia, 2020). It is bordered by the Menchum and Boyo Divisions to the North (2020), the Bamboutous Division of the Western Region to the South (Mbih *et al.*, 2018), the Ngoketunjia Division to the East (Bamboye *et al.*, 2022) and the Momo Division to the West (Ngansah *et al.*, 2024) (Figure 1). Administratively, Seven Subdivisions; Bamenda I, Bamenda II, Bamenda III, Bafut, Tubah, Santa, and Bali (Mbangari *et al.*, 2019) make up Mezam Division. Rural Mezam consists of Bafut, Bali, Santa and Tubah rural communities, having a combined population of over 498,000 (Ngwa *et al.*, 2023) people. The vegetation is the Guinea Savannah type (Magha *et al.*, 2021) distinguished by two seasons; the rainy season which starts from March to October (Tita *et al.*, 2012), and the dry season which starts from October to March (Tita *et al.*, 2012). It has an

average annual temperature of 19.93 °C (Ndjouondo *et al.*, 2022), the average annual rainfall is 2670 mm, and the average annual air temperature is 25 °C (Magha *et al.*, 2021).



**Figure 1:** Mezam Division, Northwest Region, Cameroon.

Source: Modified from Mukete *et al.* (2021)

### Study Design, Population and Sampling

A mixed design was used. Mezam was purposively selected because community associations in the urban and rural communities have been very instrumental towards transforming communities in the Division. A survey was conducted from July-August 2010. Using structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and observations, primary data was collected, and secondary data was obtained from numerous sources including the review of published and unpublished research materials in line with the issue under investigation. The study population consists of all registered CAs in the study area. Four (4) types of registered CAs randomly selected include cooperatives, common initiative groups, village development associations, and youth associations from both urban and rural communities. A sample of (571) participants was administered questionnaires by randomly selecting (25) members from each of the CAs in both urban and rural communities. Twelve (12) Key informants were purposively selected and (12) ordinary community members, adults 18 years and above were randomly selected and interviewed. Data analysis was done quantitatively and qualitatively. Frequency distributions and percentages were calculated, and the results were presented in tables, and the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test was used to analyze the research hypotheses.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Respondents Background Characteristics

Results on the background characteristics of respondents show that a greater proportion of participants were males 53.59%, and females 46.41%. This implies that more men than women participate in executing projects in the Mezam Division. Many participants fall within the age range 45-49 years 19.61%, those within 30-34 years 14.01%, participants within 25-29 years and 50 years and above 13.84% respectively, those within 20-24 years 10.16%, those within 35-39 years and 15-19 years 9.81% and 7.18% respectively. Most participants were holders of First School Leaving Certificate 27.85%, followed by holders of GCE Advance Level or equivalent 23.29%. Participants with no formal education 16.81%, those with bachelor's degrees and/or equivalent 13.31%, master's degrees and above 3.33%. This suggests that most of the participants could read and write. Many participants were privately employed 25.39%, civil servants 18.21%, traders 17.86%, students 16.11%, farmers 15.06% and artisans 7.36%. The results indicate that a greater proportion of the participants came from urban communities, 50.09% while 49.41% came from rural communities. This also suggests that residents of urban communities are more engaged in executing community development projects than those in rural communities.

### Identification of Projects Executed by Urban and Rural Community Associations

Table 1 indicates that for identification by executives of CAs 78.0% of the participants in urban communities agree and 28.4% in the rural communities disagree. Many participants, 68.8% in rural communities and 51.4% in urban communities agree that projects are identified by the executives and members of CAs. Most of the participants, 49.8% in the rural communities and 37.1% in the urban communities, agree that the community identifies projects. Most of the participants, 48.3% in the urban communities and 34.0% in the rural communities, strongly disagree that the government does not identify projects undertaken by CAs. 42.8% in the rural communities agree while 37.7% in the urban communities disagree. This implies that these urban and rural CAs take the sole responsibility for identifying the projects to be executed.

The findings revealed that CAs in urban and rural communities involve other CAs, the community, the government, and donor agencies in the identification of projects executed. These results align with the earlier findings of Wanjue (2023) who found that, in Kenya, engaging the members of a community in project execution in an area, creates trust and a sense of community ownership, resulting in sustainability (Wanjue, 2023) of projects executed. Results show that participating in executing community projects may enhance positive social improvement by encouraging robust, efficient, and sustained community development, saving the organizations' finances, increasing project success and impact, poverty reduction, and changing the livelihoods and well-being of community members (Wanjue, 2023).

**Table 1: Identification of Projects Executed by Urban (U) and Rural (R) CAs**

Items	Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status	
	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R
Executives of CAs	15 (5.2%)	78 (27.4%)	0 (0)	40 (14.0%)	24 (8.4%)	81 (28.4%)	223 (78.0%)	73 (25.6%)	24 (8.4%)	13 (4.6%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Executives/ members of CAs	24 (8.4%)	18 (6.3%)	6 (2.1%)	3 (1.1%)	4 (1.4%)	13 (4.6%)	147 (51.4%)	196 (68.8%)	105 (36.7%)	55 (19.3%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Community	77 (26.9%)	18 (6.3%)	43 (15.0%)	17 (6.0%)	51 (17.8%)	26 (9.1%)	106 (37.1%)	142 (49.8%)	9 (3.1%)	82 (28.8%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Government	47 (16.4%)	63 (22.1%)	138 (48.3%)	97 (34.0%)	70 (24.5%)	89 (31.2%)	27 (9.4%)	30 (10.5%)	4 (1.4%)	6 (2.1%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)

Donor agencies	35 (12.2%)	65 (22.8%)	46 (16.1%)	41 (14.4%)	102 (35.7%)	122 (42.8%)	93 (32.5%)	50 (17.5%)	10 (3.5%)	7 (2.5%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
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Source: Field Data (2010)

**Networking among Urban and Rural Community Associations**

Results in Table 2 show that half of the participants in urban communities 51.4% as against 66.3% in rural communities agree that CAs have networks with other CAs. Connections with local NGOs 70.6% in the urban communities and 66.3% in the rural communities agree. Less than half of the participants in the urban communities strongly agree that CAs have connections with international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) 47.6% and 34.0% in the rural communities agree. Many of the participants, 43.0% in the urban communities, agree that CAs have cooperation with parastatals while 31.6% in the rural communities were undecided.

The findings also revealed that there exists a kind of networking among urban and rural CAs in executing projects, with other CAs, local NGOs, and international NGOs. These results also align with the findings of Fajimi and Olajide (2011) who show that in Ogun State, Nigeria (Fajimi & Olajide, 2011), community development associations succeeded in the provision of electricity supply, road and drainage construction, security, beautification of the estate, and empowerment of youth over the last two years (Fajimi & Olajide, 2011), through the creation of social networks and mobilization of community members using inclusive collaboration, and creating more social networks (Fajimi & Olajide, 2011). In another study, Chen (2013) found that in Taiwan, brokerage and embeddedness of networking (Chen, 2013) were key factors related to effectiveness in project execution with community-based organizations. Olala & Nyongesa (2019) revealed that in Kisumu City, Kenya, among community-based organizations, for one standard deviation increase in networking practices, the performance in executing projects increased by approximately .526 units (Olala & Nyongesa, 2019). Networking among urban/rural CAs is of primary importance as it allows them to gain knowledge, skills and funds geared towards executing projects in their communities. The qualitative data revealed that CAs in urban areas have more external networks with INGOs than those in rural areas. According to a key participant:

Community associations in urban communities have networks with NGOs within the community and INGOs who always support them whenever a project is ongoing and, in most cases, only when the association requests assistance from them (Ward Leader Bamenda I Urban, During KIIs Session, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2010). Contrary to this view, a male participant reiterated that:

In rural communities, the associations have strong contact with each other and with NGOs within the community. That, having networks with INGOs may exist but in most instances, their impact has not been felt in these communities (Village Councilor, Bali Rural, During KIIs Session, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010).

**Table 2: Networking among Urban (U) and Rural (R) Community Associations**

Items	Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R
Community Status												

With other CAs	37 (12.9%)	9 (3.2%)	22 (7.7%)	5 (1.8%)	66 (23.1%)	5 (1.8%)	147 (51.4%)	189 (66.3%)	14 (4.9%)	77 (27.0%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Local NGOs	4 (1.4%)	5 (1.8%)	2 (.7%)	5 (1.8%)	9 (3.1%)	5 (1.8%)	202 (70.6%)	189 (66.3%)	69 (24.1%)	81 (28.4%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
International NGOs	13 (4.5%)	77 (27.0%)	6 (2.1%)	34 (11.9%)	7 (2.4%)	63 (22.1%)	124 (43.4%)	97 (34.0%)	136 (47.6%)	14 (4.9%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Parastatals	74 (25.9%)	90 (31.6%)	38 (13.3%)	58 (20.4%)	26 (16.1%)	86 (30.2%)	123 (43.0%)	47 (16.5%)	5 (1.7%)	4 (1.4%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)

Source: Field Data (2010)

### Strategies Used by Urban and Rural Community Associations in Executing Projects

Table 3 indicates that 47.6% of participants in the urban communities agree that involving other CAs in identifying projects is a strategy, while 39.3% in the rural communities disagree. In the urban communities, 39.2% disagree that CAs do not involve the community in identifying projects, while 38.8% in the rural communities agree. Identifying projects alone 47.6% in the urban communities and 46.0% in the rural communities agree, respectively. Involving NGOs/INGOs 39.6% in the urban communities agree and 49.7% of the participants in the rural communities agree. In the urban communities, 43.3% disagree that CAs do not involve the government in executing projects, while 63.5% in the rural communities agree that CAs do involve the government in executing projects.

The results indicate that urban and rural CAs employ several strategies, involving other CAs, the community, NGOs, and INGOs in executing projects in the Mezam Division. The hypothesis also confirmed that the associations in the rural areas do not adopt more strategies in executing projects than those in the urban areas. The findings differ from those of Abdullahi *et al.* (2014), who observed that in Bauchi State, members of the community were not engaged in the decision-making process regarding planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes (Abdullahi *et al.*, 2014) of projects executed by community associations.

The qualitative data also revealed a difference in the strategies used by urban and rural CAs in executing projects in urban and rural communities. A key participant advances the view that:

In the urban communities and with the cosmopolitan nature of the town, CAs identify projects alone and rely more on membership contributions and support from INGOs and other businesspeople within the community. Participation in the urban communities is not very compulsory because once a project is about to be executed, a supervisory team is formed made up of both executives and selected members. A greater part of the project is awarded a contract to contractors under the supervision of the management team from start to end (President of CA, Bali Urban, During KIIs Session, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2010). He further that while rehabilitating our quarter roads, community members only contribute a certain amount of money levied on them and the money is handed to a contractor to purchase laterites and dump at spots, identified by the executives/leaders of CAs deemed to be rehabilitated (President of CA, Bali Urban, During KIIs Session, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

On a contrary view, a male participant argued that in rural communities, any project which is community development inclined is always compulsory for all to participate in the execution of the project. According to him:

In rural communities, the associations identify a project and present it to the community for approval. Once this is done, the information is then carried out and members of the association with those of the community begin paying their levies and a receipt is issued. Sanctions are also agreed upon in the form of fines for any community member who fails to pay his/her levy or to come out and participate in the execution of projects. Participation both in cash and kind is very compulsory for all adult males and females in the community at home and abroad (President of CA, Bafut Rural, During KIIs Session, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2010).

This has been the most sustainable approach toward executing projects by CAs in rural communities in the Mezam Division.

**Table 3: Strategies Used by Urban (U) and Rural (R) Community Associations in Executing Projects**

Items	Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status	
	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R
Involve other CAs	11 (3.8%)	14 (4.9%)	38 (13.3%)	92 (32.3%)	91 (31.8%)	112 (39.3%)	136 (47.6%)	59 (20.7%)	10 (3.5%)	8 (2.8%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Involve the Community	42 (14.7%)	39 (13.7%)	69 (24.1%)	26 (9.1%)	112 (39.2%)	101 (35.4%)	56 (19.6%)	105 (36.8%)	7 (2.4%)	14 (4.9%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Identify projects alone	42 (14.7%)	15 (5.5%)	39 (13.6%)	7 (2.5%)	47 (16.4%)	22 (7.7%)	136 (47.6%)	131 (46.0%)	22 (7.7%)	110 (38.6%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Involve NGOs/INGOs	32 (11.2%)	38 (13.3%)	15 (5.2%)	32 (11.2%)	79 (27.6%)	113 (39.6%)	142 (49.7%)	84 (29.5%)	18 (6.35%)	18 (6.3%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Involve the government	34 (11.9%)	29 (10.2%)	25 (8.7%)	10 (3.5%)	124 (43.4%)	32 (11.2%)	97 (33.9%)	181 (63.5%)	6 (2.1%)	33 (11.6%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)

Source: Field Data (2010)

**Test of Hypothesis 1**

The test of hypothesis which states that; community associations in the rural areas are likely to adopt more strategies than urban ones was analyzed with the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) distribution test. Table 4 shows a calculated ( $\chi^2$ ) value of 17.321 at 4df at 0.05 level of significance which is greater than the ( $\chi^2$ ) table value of 9.49 and was rejected. This implies that CAs in rural communities do not tend to employ more strategies in executing projects than those in urban communities.

**Table 4: Test of Hypothesis 1**

Variables	P-value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
They involve the community	37.387	4	.000
They involve other CAs in identifying projects	55.589	4	.000
They identify projects alone	102.867	4	.000
They involve NGOs/INGOs in identifying projects	27.567	4	.000
They involve the government in identifying projects	105.154	4	.000

( $\chi^2$ ) = 17.321; df = 4; P= 0.05

Source: Field Data (2010)

**Strengths of Urban (U) and Rural (R) Community Associations in Executing Projects**

Data in Table 5 revealed that most participants 68.9% in urban communities and 61.8% in rural communities agree that CAs have a strong ability to sensitize the community towards executing community development projects. For building capacity of members, 56.6% in urban communities and 61.1% in rural communities agree. For community capacity building 61.1% in rural communities and 32.5% in urban communities agree. In terms of numerical strength 47.6% in urban communities strongly agree and 46.0% in rural communities agree. In terms of fundraising, 47.6% of participants in urban communities strongly agree and 46.0% in rural communities agree. For commitment by members, 61.4% in rural communities and 42.8% in urban communities agree.

It was revealed from the findings that urban and rural CAs are strong in sensitizing the community, building capacity of members, community capacity building, numerical strength, fundraising, and commitment by members. Opare (2007) reveals that developing leadership skills, internal and external networking and affiliation with official public agencies (Opare,

2007), were identified and elaborated upon as sustainable project execution strategies to strengthen CBOs, enhance their capability in delivering services and well position to be able to make use of available resources (Opare, 2007) to develop their communities. Information from the qualitative data revealed that:

These associations in the rural communities employ a method whereby all the adult males and females come out in their numbers to contribute toward the execution of projects and defaulters are punished by paying a heavy fine (Ordinary Member, Bali Rural, During KIIs Session, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010). Another participant argued that:

To an extent, in the rural communities, these strategies have not been very effective because in the process of paying dues and levies, not everybody pays, those collecting the money are not trustworthy and in punishing defaulters, some are favoured and this has created a situation whereby some people feel discouraged and preferred paying fines than to come out during community work (Local Notable, Bali Rural, During KIIs Session, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010). A male participant suggested that:

The best way of improving these strategies in rural communities is to make sure that in punishing defaulters, all should be punished irrespective of other factors like interpersonal relationships and people's position. Everybody should be treated equally to encourage effective participation in executing projects (Village Councilor, Bali Rural, During KIIs Session, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010).

**Table 5: Strengths of Urban (U) and Rural (R) Community Associations in Executing Projects**

Items	Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status	
	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R
Ability to sensitize the community.	9 (3.1%)	15 (5.3%)	10 (3.5%)	4 (1.4%)	41 (14.3%)	5 (1.8%)	197 (68.9%)	176 (61.8%)	29 (10.1%)	85 (29.8%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Building capacity of CA's members	12 (4.2%)	14 (4.9%)	8 (2.8%)	0	8 (2.8%)	9 (3.2%)	162 (56.6%)	174 (61.1%)	96 (33.6%)	88 (30.9%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Community capacity building	62 (21.7%)	42 (14.7%)	42 (14.7%)	9 (3.2%)	66 (23.1%)	22 (7.74%)	93 (32.9%)	174 (61.1%)	23 (8.0%)	38 (13.3%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Numerical strength	56 (19.6%)	24 (8.4%)	26 (9.1%)	2 (0.7%)	72 (25.2%)	11 (3.9%)	100 (35.0%)	112 (39.3%)	32 (11.2%)	136 (47.7%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)

Source: Field Data (2010)

### Test of Hypothesis 2

The test of hypothesis which states that; the achievement of CAs in executing projects in the locality tends to depend on the strength of the association was analyzed with the use of the ( $\chi^2$ ) test. Table 6 indicates calculated ( $\chi^2$ ) values of 57.136 and 22.553 for urban and rural CAs respectively at 9df at 0.05 level of significance which is greater than the ( $\chi^2$ ) table value of 16.92 and was rejected. This implies that the achievement of CAs in executing projects in the locality does not tend to depend on the strength of the association.

**Table 6: Test of Hypothesis 2**

Community Status	P-value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Urban	57.136	9	.000
Rural	22.553	9	0.007

$(\chi^2)$  Urban = 57.136; df = 9; P = 0.05

$(\chi^2)$  Rural = 22.553; df = 9; P = 0.05

Source: Field Data (2010)

### Weaknesses of Urban and Rural Community Associations in Executing Projects

Table 7 shows that CAs have some weaknesses in executing projects in the Mezam Division. Up to 53.7% in rural communities agree that being unable to mobilize the community is a weakness and 36.4% in urban communities disagree. For uncompleted projects, 54.0% in rural communities and 38.1% in urban communities agree respectively. Most participants 39.5% in urban communities strongly agree that limited funding is a weakness of urban-based CAs and 33.7% in rural communities were undecided. For lack of commitment by members, 46.9% of participants in urban communities agree and (31.6%) in rural communities disagree. Results show that in rural communities 38.9% of participants disagreed with poor management of projects while 28.3% in urban communities strongly disagreed. It was pointed out by participants in the interviews from Bali that lack of awareness due to illiteracy contributes to the slow execution of projects by CAs.

The findings revealed that even though these associations are playing a good role in executing projects in their respective communities, they are faced with some weaknesses such as being unable to mobilize the community, limited funding, lack of commitment by members, and above all poor management of projects. The findings differ from those of Fonchingong & Ngwa (2005) who show that CAs are faced with many challenges in Northwest Cameroon when the process must involve the execution of cumbersome projects such as rural electrification, road construction, water supply, and health centres (Fonchingong & Ngwa, 2005) requiring the availability of huge finances and skilled personnel to execute such projects. This suggests the reason the government and INGOs should be empowering them through financial aid. According to a key participant:

The village development associations in the rural communities are faced with the problem of illiteracy, slow project execution and the presence of uncompleted abandoned projects (Ordinary Member, Bali Rural, During KIIs Session, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010).

**Table 7: Weaknesses of Urban (U) and Rural (R) Community Associations in Executing Projects**

Items	Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status	
	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R
Unable to mobilize the community	44 (15.4%)	36 (12.6%)	31 (10.8%)	22 (7.7%)	104 (36.4%)	33 (11.6%)	96 (33.6%)	153 (53.7%)	11 (3.8%)	41 (41.4%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Projects are uncompleted	67 (23.4%)	14 (4.9%)	34 (11.9%)	12 (4.2%)	43 (15.0%)	19 (6.7%)	109 (38.1%)	154 (54.0%)	33 (11.5%)	86 (30.2%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Limited funding	28 (9.8%)	96 (33.7%)	36 (12.6%)	33 (11.6%)	19 (6.6%)	87 (30.5%)	90 (31.5%)	51 (17.9%)	113 (39.5%)	18 (6.3%)	286 (100%)	285 (100.0%)
Lack of commitment by members	29 (10.1%)	98 (34.4%)	9 (3.1%)	30 (10.5%)	5 (1.7%)	90 (31.6%)	134 (46.9%)	48 (16.8%)	109 (38.1%)	19 (6.7%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Poor management of projects	74 (25.9%)	40 (14.0%)	81 (28.3%)	100 (35.1%)	73 (25.5%)	11 (38.9%)	48 (16.8%)	26 (10.2%)	10 (3.5%)	5 (1.8%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)

Source: Field Data (2010)

### Sources of Funds by Urban and Rural Community Associations for Executing Projects

Table 8 revealed that up to 52.8% in urban communities and 45.6% in rural communities strongly agree that internal fundraising is a source of funds. In terms of public fundraising, 64.7% in urban communities and 59.6% in rural communities agree. Most participants, 32.6% in urban

communities and 34.4% in rural communities agree on government funding as a source of funds. The results show that 55.6% of participants in urban communities and 44.6% of participants in rural communities agree on grants from donor agencies as a source of funds. The qualitative data further revealed that CAs in urban and rural communities have organized means of raising funds.

Also, internal fundraising, public fundraising, and grants from donor agencies are all sources of funds for CAs in executing projects in the Mezam Division. The results differ from that of Ukpongson *et al.* (2014), who advanced that in Imo State, Nigeria, self-reliance has remained the most available means 99.1% (Ukpongson *et al.*, 2014) of raising funds for executing projects in the community than other sources. The findings also differ from that of Fateye *et al.* (2021), reveal that membership levies/contributions remain the most reliable means of raising a budget for the execution of basic community projects and the push factors have the ability of the people to ignite cooperative spirit among members, the willingness to raise funds and the income status (Fateye *et al.*, 2021) of community members in Nigeria's urban cities. According to a key participant in the key informant interview:

The associations in the urban communities are made up of executives who pioneer the activities of the association. They raise funds through membership registration, payment of levies by members, donations from businesspeople in the community, and aid from non-governmental organizations (Secretary of CA, Bali Urban, During KIIs Session, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2010). In the same vein, a male participant said:

The associations in the rural communities have executives with branches from all over the national territory and the branch presidents form the national executive who then transmit information to their various branches concerning what each branch is supposed to contribute toward the execution of any project within the community (Local Notable, Bamenda I Rural, During KIIs Session, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010). Another participant supported that:

In terms of fundraising, the association in rural communities organizes fundraising ceremonies accompanied by a gala night, requiring the whole community to contribute, elite contributions, and members paying a certain amount toward the realization of any project to be executed within the community (Ordinary Member, Bafut Rural, During KIIs Session, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2010).

A male participant was of the view that “*the cooperatives raise funds through the sales of shares to members and the interest generated from loans to members*” (Local Notable, Bamenda I Rural, During KIIs Session, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010). A female ordinary member of CAs advanced that “*The CIGs also act as a labour force which could be hired and paid for, they also raise a lot of funds from the sales of agricultural produce from group’s farm and through membership registration, organization of bazaar, fines, as well as loans from well-to-do members*”. All these financial resources are harnessed toward effective project execution.

**Table 8: Sources of Funds by Urban (U) and Rural (R) Community Associations in the Mezam Division**

Items	Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status	
	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R

Internal fundraising	-	7 (2.5%)	1 (0.3%)	14 (4.9%)	1 (0.3%)	24 (8.4%)	133 (46.5%)	130 (45.6%)	151 (52.8%)	110 (38.6%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Public Fundraising	45 (15.7%)	14 (4.9%)	3 (1.0%)	8 (2.8%)	3 (1.0%)	24 (8.4%)	185 (64.7%)	170 (59.6%)	24 (8.4%)	69 (24.2%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Government Funding	37 (13.0%)	71 (24.9%)	74 (26.0%)	43 (15.1%)	74 (26.0%)	42 (14.7%)	93 (32.6%)	98 (34.3%)	25 (8.8%)	31 (10.9%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Grants from donor agencies	19 (6.6%)	45 (15.8%)	30 (10.5%)	8 (2.8%)	30 (10.5%)	72 (25.3%)	159 (55.6%)	127 (44.6%)	40 (14.0%)	33 (11.6%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)

Source: Field Data (2010)

### Suggestions for Improving the Role of Urban and Rural CAs in Executing Project

Table 9 indicates that 45.8% in urban communities and 38.6% in rural communities strongly disagree that the government should not define specific areas to be addressed as a suggestion for improving the role of CAs in executing projects. In the urban communities, 54.2% and 50.9% in rural communities strongly agree that the government should give them aid. For the skills of CA members to be developed, 56.6% in urban communities and 61.8% in rural communities agree. Most participants, 51.14 % in urban communities and 72.6% in rural communities agree that members should be devoted to CAs' activities. This was followed by those who strongly agreed with 45.8% in urban communities and 24.2% in rural communities. For projects to reflect the felt needs of the community, 63.3% in urban communities agree and 61.4% in rural communities.

The findings suggest that the government should give them aid, the skills of CA members to be developed, and members should be devoted to CA's activities and projects to reflect the community's expectations. These results differ from that of Abdullahi (2019), who indicated that community development associations have changed the rate of development in the community (Abdullahi, 2019) despite the lack of counterpart funding in Sabon Gari Local Government Area, Kaduna State (Abdullahi, 2019). Ochelle (2012) reveals that participation in community project initiatives, financing community projects, managing community projects and training (Ochelle, 2012), influence the sustainability of community water projects in Buuri Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya (Ochelle, 2012). Accountability and transparency (Ochelle, 2012) of committee members were key factors influencing project sustainability. Participants in the qualitative data suggested that:

The government should revise the law governing the functioning of these associations and tend to support them fully because most of the things they are doing are things that were supposed to be done by the government (Traditional Ruler, Bafut Rural, During KIIs Session, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2010). Another participant added that:

Non-governmental organizations should try and educate the members of these associations and even send a supervisory team to ensure that proper management of projects is done (Municipal Councilor for Bafut Urban, During KIIs Session, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2010). A male participant in the key informant interview suggested that:

INGOs should be sending enough funds since their major cry is inadequate to finance so that these associations will be able to perform their role well in executing community development projects in a locality and on time (Male Ward Leader Bali Urban, During KIIs Session, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2010).

**Table 9: Suggestions for Improving the Role of Urban (U) and Rural (R) Community Associations in Executing Projects**

Items	Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status		Community Status	
	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R
The government should define specific areas to address.	26 (9.11%)	51 (17.9%)	131 (45.8%)	110 (38.65)	88 (3.8%)	57 (20.0%)	9 (3.1%)	47 (16.5%)	32 (11.2%)	20 (7.0%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
The government should give them aid.	7 (2.4%)	10 (3.5%)	18 (6.3%)	19 (6.7%)	9 (3.1%)	12 (4.2%)	97 (33.9%)	99 (34.7%)	155 (54.2%)	145 (50.9%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
The skills of CA members should be developed.	5 (1.7%)	14 (4.9%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.4%)	162 (56.6%)	176 (61.8%)	117 (40.9%)	93 (32.6%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Members should be devoted to CAs' activities.	7 (2.4%)	9 (3.2%)	1 (0.3%)	0	0	0	147 (51.14%)	207 (72.6%)	131 (45.8%)	69 (24.2%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)
Projects to reflect the felt needs of the community	5 (1.7%)	5 (1.8%)	1 (0.3%)	0	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.4%)	181 (63.3%)	175 (61.4%)	98 (34.3%)	104 (36.5%)	286 (100%)	285 (100%)

Source: Field Data (2010)

### CONCLUSION

Community associations in the urban and rural communities are actors of development at the local level. These associations should be able to mobilize the community to massively turn out and participate in all phases of project execution. This suggests a sense of commitment and ownership over the community project execution process embarked upon by urban and rural community associations. Creating networks with local organizations, international organizations, the government, and stakeholders is a prerequisite towards successful project execution. Members of CAs should be well-trained in bookkeeping and recording as a strategy for effective project execution. Building the capacity of CA members will boost their strength towards successful community project execution and by so doing, these organizations will be able to overcome their weaknesses in project execution. Urban and rural CAs should be capable of creating more external networks as these will help to enhance their sources of funds needed for effective project execution. The management should make sure that proper accounting and reporting of project activities is presented to the general assembly, to avoid conflict arising from mismanagement of project funds.

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