

Developmental Episodes and Impact of Selected Hometown Associations in Southwestern Communities in Nigeria

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Abstract

The role of hometown associations (HTAs) is quite old in the socio-economic and cultural development of the population in Southwestern Nigeria. Informed by the pre-literate African society and kinship systems, HTAs became institutionalized community entities in the colonial times, and the mandate was to serve the needs of the local population as well applied development. This paper discusses developmental events and influences of the chosen users of HTAs such as Egbe Atunluse Ile-Ijesa, Ifon Progressive Union, Ilobu Progressive Union, Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union, Fiditi Progressive Union, Erin Progressive Union and Egbe Omo Ibile Awe. With the help of archival materials, historical documents, and secondary literature, the study also demonstrates the functions of the associations concerning infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. The results of the research show that the HTA did not just complement the government in delivering the necessary services, but also became the tool of civic activity, preservation of culture, and identity building on the collective level. Nevertheless, the challenges, including the lack of financial resources and political manipulation, were adjusted over the years and women and the younger population were included in leadership and project implementation.

Keywords: Hometown Associations, Southwestern Nigeria, Community Development, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Civic Engagement, Socio-economic Transformation, Colonial Era, Grassroots Organizations

Introduction / Background

Associational life is a basic element of the African culture as it depends on mutual reliance and community that pre-literate societies are characterized by. This has been a tradition that has lasted over centuries and continues to be applied in modern day African societies. Through this, the trend has seen the rise of a relatively important phenomenon, namely, Hometown Associations (HTAs), which play an important role in the development of the localities and social integration, particularly, in the Nigerian society.

In the past we can divide associational life in Africa broadly into four major types: political, religious, occupational, and mutual help/convivial associations. The pre-literate African cultures shaped themselves in kinship and ancestry patterns, and their members had strong blood relationships within the extended families and within the groups of people. The social structure was also usually hierarchical based on age and gender where the cohort-based commitments and benefits changed with maturity of the members. In

these systems, social responsibility and communal cooperation were one of the pillars that helped them to guide both individual and social behavior.

Nigeria Community life Community life in Nigeria is traditionally linked with the grassroots associations like benevolent societies offering services to their members, trade and occupational associations and the town unions which perform the functions of carrying out the works of the pertinent government bodies, something that the government institutions often cannot achieve. In this regard, hometowns are what are usually considered as the paternal birthplace or the ancestral homestead of the one being born regardless of place of birth or residence of an individual person or the individual himself. This bond created a strong desire to create tribal and hometown ties, and this was a sense of social affiliation and loyalty to the development of the community.

There are two major differences between HTA and other local organizations. To begin with, they are created with the sole aim of offering basic services to the entire population of a specific area. Second, these are mostly led by educated men who have moved to the urban centers but still have strong attachment to their hometowns. The role of women in HTAs has increased significantly over the past decades, even though it has traditionally been male-dominated, which is related to larger-scale social and cultural transformations.

The contemporary development of HTAs in Nigeria has yet again been closely connected with the English colonial era wherein common ancestry over common place of residence was the unifying principle, thus being able to maintain close connection with town of origin whilst remaining engaged in doing professional and economic activity in another place. The urbanization of cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, and Calabar in the early twentieth century and the influx of the educated elite in the foreign cities stimulated the increase of tribal associations. Through these organizations, there was organized channel of mobilizing resources, to the benefit of rural communities and initiating modern administration.

The Nigerian government acknowledged the triple advantage of HTAs after independence to augment the state activities in the rural area especially when the economy was hit by crisis in the 1980s. The regime of General Babangida incorporated HTAs into their programs, including the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) and Movement for Mass Mobilization (MAMSER), and have argued that HTAs acted as shadow states, parallel to the state apparatus of delivery of social services and infrastructural projects once held by state institutions.

The resources raised by HTAs are used in a very diverse set of projects where they facilitate a wide spectrum of education, health, agriculture, infrastructure, and social welfare projects even without governmental backing, showing the indispensability of HTAs in local development pathways.

Conceptual Framework and Types of Hometown Associations (HTAs)

Conceptual Framework

Hometown Associations (HTAs) are community-based organizations that are voluntary and which assemble human and financial resources to develop the socio-economic life of the localities of origin of the members. They constitute associational life, a sociological notion that characterizes organized voluntary collective action to accomplish collective goals. In the Nigerian case, HTAs are established in the innate knowledge systems with an indication of the local custom, social norms and obligation to the wider community.

The social capital theory of social networks, trust and reciprocity as factors in terms of collective action and community development has been the theoretical basis of HTAs, in those individuals, despite their

physical distance in urban centers or even other countries, have a high degree of social obligations to their ancestral towns. These commitments are practical in nature including financing infrastructure projects, sponsoring learning institutions and provision of social welfare services. Communal trust and shared identity and structured leadership therefore make the effectiveness of HTAs in catalyzing local development a product.

In addition to this, the shadow state framework can be employed to examine the HTAs, and it conceptualizes these associations as a supplement to formal state formations. A shadow state, according to Woloch (1989), is a para-state apparatus which prior to the emergence of the HTAs had the collective service responsibilities which the state was incapable of or inefficient at delivering such as the building of roads, health centers, schools and the management of community development funds.

Types of Hometown Associations.

The HTAs are very heterogeneous in their structure and focus and tend to mirror the developmental needs and other socio-cultural peculiarities of the local communities. According to scholars, the following are the broad categories of HTAs.

1. Associations of Culture and Heritage.

These HTAs are mainly aimed at maintenance and propagation of the indigenous practices, cultural values, festivals and languages. As an illustration, the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe focuses on preservation and maintenance of cultures as well as indulging in education and infrastructural developments. The cultural HTAs usually act as the custodians of the communal identity, promoting the sense of place-consciousness on the members; and keeping the traditions going across generations.

2. Associations Educational and Welfare.

Numerous HTAs education and social welfare are their main priority. This involves setting up the schools, scholarship programs, teacher training programs and health care programs. As examples, the Ilobu Progressive Union and Fiditi Progressive Union both invested in grammar schools and health facilities both improving literacy rates and social wellbeing in their local communities.

3. Economic and Developmental Relations.

Others are economically focused and informatics focused on nature, in which case they may appear as mini-community development bank or cooperative society. This company is the case example: The Awe Development Corporation (ADC), a subdivision of Egbe Omo Ibile Awe, fostered profitable business and organized the residents of urban areas with their funds as a way of development of their area.

4. Political and Advocacy Associations.

Some HTAs are involved in advocacy and governance oversight as well as community representation. They can approach the government authorities to request grants of infrastructures, improved payments of local chiefs, or revival of the traditional institutions. An example is the Ilobu Progressive Union, which was able to lobby colonial governments to grant their traditional leaders better pay, as well as creation of post offices and other social services. Functions of HTAs

Under any category, HTAs fulfill vital roles forming social cohesion agents and drivers of local development:

- **Resource Mobilization:** It involves collecting dues, levies and donations to finance the community projects.
- **Development of Infrastructure:** Construction of roads, schools, hospitals, markets as well as development of public facilities.

- Education Promotion: Founding of schools, training and offering scholarships to teachers.
- Social Welfare and Health Services: Favors health centers, medical outreach programs and community welfare programs.
- Cultural Preservation: Ensuring the promotion of indigenous festivals, languages and indigenous institutions.
- Advocacy and Governance: Lobbying on the governments to help, improving the provision of services and good governance practices.

Combining such functions, HTAs generate a synergistic community-oriented system of development, and they show how voluntary associations can be a supplement to what states do and support local development.

Historical Development and Evolution of Hometown Associations (HTAs) in Southwestern Nigeria

The rise and development of Hometown Associations (HTAs) in the Southwestern Nigeria is strongly associated with the sociocultural, economic, and political changes in the area, especially those in the colonial and post-colonial era. What developed with the HTAs was the community-based organizations which filled the gap between local demands and the overall small ability of the new colonial and post-colonial state to deliver wanted or necessary services. These communities were illustrations of flexibility, steadiness and service to a common good that were founded on blood relations, common lineages and community amenities.

Colonial Period Origins (1910s–1950s)

History of HTAs in contemporary Nigeria can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century when British colonial rule was in effect and urbanization of the Southwestern Nigerian cities like Lagos, Ibadan and Osogbo began escalating. The educated elites who were usually in colonial civil service or business started organizing themselves into voluntary associations to aid their towns of origin and therefore in urban centers they could be in touch with their kin at home and could develop the local areas through informal means.

Prominent early HTAs include:

1. **Egbe Atunluse Ile-Ijesa (Ijesa Improvement Society, 1922):** Founded by Ijesa native people in the current Osun State, this association was focusing on education and political development. Other major accomplishments that it participated in included aiding the formation of Ilesa Grammar School and lobbying the promotion of the traditional heads in the local area to the position of kingship. Egbe Atunluse Ile-Ijesa was a clear example of mobilization of Diaspora elites to register local development deliverables.
2. **Ifon Progressive Union (1941):** The association initially had a hard time gaining recognition by the colonialists because it was initially started by a few educated indigenes. Through the mediation of the supreme leader, King Bamikefa, the union was given official status and concentrated on the infrastructural development including roads, town-halls and markets to boost the economic well-being of the area. The union changed to nomenclature music with the course of time, following the changing focus and the expansion of the structure so that finally the organization was named Ifon Progressive Association.

3. **Ilobu Progressive Union (1944–1949):** The trade union also gave a bare focus on education and farming which saw the creation of Ilobu Secondary Commercial Grammar School in 1972. The Ibadan branch was also prolific in lobbying colonial governments through the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund, which are some of the first examples of HTAs engaging with state government to access the resources to develop their community.
4. **Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union (1930):** The union predominantly comprised of indigenes who worked in Lagos and this was an epitome of community strength even with the disregard of the colonial government. Some of the major accomplishments made were the development of roads, schools, a meeting hall, and utilities in addition to creating new methods that would be used to raise capital towards developmental projects. It is worth noting that the community was able to install electricity poles which they used to gain access to the national grid demonstrating the creativity of the union and its organizational skills.
5. **Fiditi Progressive Union (1934):** Fiditi Progressive Union was led by literates and educated in missionary schools, and they had the interest of expanding the primary education, building Fiditi Grammar School (1954) and the basic infrastructure like roads, telephone, and electricity. Its actions enhanced the social and economic lives of inhabitants besides strengthening the powers and influence of the association in the community.
6. **Erin Progressive Union (1947):** The union received fame with constant advocacy initially facing opposition by the supreme ruler. Examples of HTAs negotiating political and administrative challenges to the benefit of the locals include Erin Progressive Union in building roads (Erin -Ede Road), joint community high schools, health centers, postal services and reinstating the Native Court.
7. **Egbe Omo Ibile Awe (1912):** This association was one of the oldest in Nigeria and it focused on cultural preservation and education by founding its first secondary school in 1954. As a means of attracting younger urban-based indigenes, in 1982, the union established Awe Development Corporation (ADC), which emphasized on an adaptive strategy towards integrating any entrepreneurial action in the community development.

Post-Colonial Evolution (1960s–1980s)

In the post-colonial state that was characterized by a weak and centralized government the HTAs remained to be a central figure in the community development after independence in 1960. The development of HTAs in this decade was partially because of the economic crisis in the 1980s, which limited the capacity of governments and provoked the transition of the government to the support of the civil society and voluntary associations to provide essential services.

The HTAs became officially part of rural development policies, working under such initiatives as the Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), the Movement for Mass Mobilization (MAMSER) during the General Babangida administration (1985-1993). These initiatives were viewing HTAs as shadow states, organizations that could substitute government roles, particularly infrastructure and welfare provision.

Key Factors Influencing HTA Sustainability

Several reasons led to the survival and the ongoing applicability of HTAs in Southwestern Nigeria:

- Strong sense of attachment to their ancestral houses: Members of urban and diaspora families were loyal to their hometowns and made continuous donations.

- Resource mobilization employed successful strategies in terms of resources mobilization, namely membership dues and levies along with donations and joint ventures to fund projects.
- Adaptive leadership: Visionary leaders presented new development policies, institutionalized governance forms and created accountability.

Cultural and civic identity: HTAs enhanced development incorporating cultural pride as a way of strengthening social cohesion and community membership.

Funding Mechanisms, Organizational Structures, and Operational Strategies of HTAs

Not only are Hometown Associations (HTAs) in Southwestern Nigeria social and cultural organizations, but they are also functional organizations and as such, have established financial, administrative, and operational structures. They have helped these institutions to sustain developmental initiatives and remain relevant throughout decades despite the realities of rural poverty, urban migration and economic changes.

Funding Mechanisms

HTA projects need financial resources to carry out their operations. The necessary sources of revenue in the case of HTA are usually four: membership fees, collections, willful gifts, and the revenues from communal works.

1. **Membership Dues:** Financial sustainability is founded on a fixed or regular contribution made by every single member. They are usually organized based on the economic ability and social position of the member in such a way that there is fair participation in addition to getting maximum revenue.
2. **Levies and Special Assessments:** HTAs not only introduce temporary levies on members in particular projects like construction of roads or a school. Such fees are usually passed on as part of general meetings and are specifically set aside for the targeted development project.
3. **Voluntary Donations:** Elite members and those who lived in the diaspora tend to give extra contributions on a voluntary basis. Such contributions may be in the form of donation in money, equipment, or even technical know-how. It is important to note that the feeling of personal and civic duty to the community of origin is manifested in donations.
4. **Community Building Works and Companies** Others source their funds by profit making enterprises like local market, community farm, or cooperative society. As an illustration, Egbe Omo Ibile Awe founded the Awe Development Corporation to utilize the entrepreneurial capabilities of younger members and at the same time aid in the development of the community.⁶

Such sources of funds reveal financial resourcefulness and mobilization of funds, such that HTAs can take radical infrastructure and welfare projects on board, despite deficient government support.

Organizational Structures

HTAs typically adopt hierarchical structures that mirror traditional governance systems while incorporating modern management principles. The structures generally consist of:

1. **Executive Committee:** The strategic decision making, policy implementation and representation at the external front are under the executive committee board headed by a President or a Chairman. This is made possible by positions like Secretary, Treasurer and Public Relations Officer that provide administrative and financial administration specialization.
2. **Advisory or Elders' Council:** In most of the HTAs, a panel of esteemed elders or founders offers advice on the community priorities, conflict resolution, and culture maintenance. This council sustains

cultural legitimacy of the association as well as moral authority.

3. **Sub-committees:** Abnormal accommodation HTAs have special sub- committees on education, infrastructure, health, culture and engagement of youth. These sub-committees design, oversee and offer the projects as controlled by the executive committee so that there is discipline in the management of projects and accountability.
4. **Diaspora and Urban Branches:** Having branches based in cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, and even in the overseas cities, diasporas are very important in raising funds, advocacy, and overseeing the projects. These branches serve as bridges between the urban members and the rural communities, whereby the mobilization of resources should be in line with the local needs.

Operational Strategies

There are several approaches used by HTAs to make them sustainable, effective and acceptable to the community:

1. **Community Partnership with Local Governments:** Associations are actively participating in colonial and post-colonial administrative structures to gain approvals, matching grants, and technical support. Indicatively, the Ibadan arm of Ilobu Progressive Union was able to lobby the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund to embark on the improvement of roads which is evidence of the skill of negotiation that the HTAs have developed.
2. **Self-Help and Community Participation:** Self-reliance and collective effort are a characteristic feature of HTAs, regularly recruiting members to provide labor and materials or knowledge locally. The benefit of this presentation is that it promotes ownership, saving of costs, and increasing social cohesion.
3. **Meetings and Reporting: Periodically:** Frequent gatherings e.g. quarterly and annual general meetings offer accountability, transparency, and shared decision-making platforms. Financial reports, project reports, and future projections reassure the members of trust, as well as upholding the objectives of the association.
4. **The theory of Cultural Integration in Development:** HTAs are bold enough to incorporate cultural identity and heritage promotion in its operation processes. These encompass sponsorship of festivals, preservation of places of cultural heritage as well as encouraging vernacular education, hence strengthening place-consciousness and communal pride.
5. **Youth and Women Inclusion:** Contemporary HTAs are giving more weight to women and younger members at the head of the matter and project implementation. HTAs increase the mobilization of resources, innovation, and sustainability in the long term by expanding participation.

Influence of Financing and Company processes.

These three elements of strong funding plans, systematic governance, and involvement of operations have helped HTAs to maintain long-term development initiatives. As an example, the development of hospitals, post offices, ring roads, and police stations by Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union illustrates successful mobilization of funds, manpower and technical capabilities, since the government initiatives had failed in the areas.¹⁶ and, in a similar light, Erin Progressive Union, working on the joint community high schools and road networks, reflects the ability of HTAs to fill the gaps in development where governmental initiatives had failed.

Developmental Achievements and Socio-Economic Impact of HTAs in Southwestern Nigeria

Associations, known as Hometown Associations (HTAs), have been the key to social-economic transformation of Southwestern Nigerian communities. Their initiatives cut across education, healthcare, infrastructure, cultural maintenance and governance and tend to offset shortcomings in state initiatives. HTAs by mobilizing human, financial and technical resources have realized major sustainable developmental results, especially in the rural and semi-urban districts.

Education

Historically, education has been one of the main aspects of development of HTAs. At early stages, interventions were witnessed through the building of primary and secondary schools, supplying the institution with teaching personnel and students were funded. For instance:

1. Egbe Atunluse Ile-Ijesa (Ijesa Improvement Society) facilitated the foundation of Ilesa Grammar School which enhanced the access to formal education and increased the literacy levels in the community.
2. In 1972, Ilobu Progressive Union founded the Ilobu Secondary Commercial Grammar School to not only meet educational but also the vocational demand of the immediate population.
3. In 1954, Fiditi Progressive Union also increased primary education and helped to construct Fiditi grammar school, also trained and recruited teachers and because of this process, provided good education.

These measures made HTAs not only multiply educational opportunities but also formed human resources that can further support the development of the local community and the country in general.

Healthcare and Social Welfare.

HTAs have been keen on enhancing access to healthcare by building and operating health centers, clinics and hospitals. Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union is an example of such intervention in which they funded a 25-bed hospital, as well as the provision of other social infrastructure which included post offices, town watch employment, and other social infrastructure.

There are also other healthcare projects by HTAs, which are:

- Supply of primary medical equipment and medication.
- Maternal and child health programs facilitation.
- Introduction of community health awareness measures, which lowered the prevalence of diseases, and increased the level of health literacy.

By looking into the basic needs of social welfare, HTAs have improved the quality of life and minimized susceptibility to poverty-related health hazards.

Infrastructure Development

Physical infrastructure has remained one of the strategic developments that have been taken seriously by HTAs. Highway networks, bridges, electricity and communication systems financed by and run through HTAs have changed the local economies. Examples include:

1. Erin Progressive Union, that led in the construction of the Erin-Ede Road, the trade road that promoted mobility and accessibility of necessary services.

2. Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union, which is an agency tasked with the responsibility of construction of meeting halls, ring roads as well as utility services, making it possible to draw investment as well as facilitation of business within the community.
 3. A hybrid model of community work and the state cooperation was shown by Ilobu Progressive Union, that joined self-help grants and government grants to improve the development of local roads.
- These were the projects that increased accessibility of the markets, minimized transportation expenses and stimulated the local business that would benefit in both the long-term economic growth.

Community Identity and Cultural Preservation.

HTAs take the initiative of keeping alive indigenous culture, language and traditions. They also fund cultural festivals, heritage sites and they also generate vernacular educational materials which emphasize community members with a strong sense of place and identity.

For example:

- Egbe Omo Ibile Awe paid attention to continuity of cultures to establish Awe Development Corporation, where economic progression was intertwined with cultural continuation.
- Festivals were also used by HTAs as an avenue to intergenerational value, arts and folklore transmission that strengthened societal members at the expense of community pride.

By implementing such efforts, the HTAs enhance the capital of social networks and the norms of local government based on the culture and tradition.

Economic Empowerment

The HTA supports the local economic development by:

- Microloans and cooperative societies are provided to assist the farmers and petty traders.
- Promotion of entrepreneurship and professional training, especially in relation to young people and diaspora colonists.
- Creation of job opportunities through community works and therefore alleviating the pressure of rural-urban migration.

Through the association of development and economic opportunity, HTAs have developed sustainable livelihood plans that have enhanced the household income levels and diminished economic vulnerability.

Democracy and Civil Society.

Good governance, transparency, and accountability at local level have also been advocated by the HTAs. HTAs cared about the interests of the community by pleading with colonial and post-colonial leaders, keeping a check on the local leaders, and pressing traditional rulers to receive equitable payments.

For instance:

- Ilobu Progressive Union challenged councilors who failed to carry out their duties of community development and there was an improvement in the way the local governance was done.
- Here, the HTAs have served as go-between organizations between the rural population and government agencies, especially when it comes to implementing development programs like DFRRI and MAMSER projects in the 1980s.

The Net Socio-Economic Impact.

The long-term outcomes of interventions with the requirement of HTA are immense:

1. Increased literacy and education, which form a work force.
2. Enhanced medical coverage, minimizing the morbidity and death rates.
3. Infrastructure develops; local trade and movement grow.
4. Cultural continuation, which leads to a sense of identity and unity within the community.
5. Monetary empowerment that empowers livelihoods and local enterprise.
6. Citizen participation and responsibility.

With these complex functions, HTAs are deemed to be needed as catalysts to community development, complement state undertakings, and to make local development people-oriented and specific.

Challenges and Sustainability of Hometown Associations (HTAs) in Southwestern Nigeria

Regardless of the immense success of HTAs, there have been several structural, socio-economic, and political issues limiting the activities and viability of these agencies. These challenges are important in defining the long-term sustainability of HTAs and the community development issues that it brings with it.

Financial Constraints

Inadequate and unreliable funding is one of the acute problems of HTAs. Majority of the associations have raised funds on dues, levies, donations and project related funds; however, the increasing magnitude and expense of development initiatives have frequently exceeded their financial capabilities.

- The ongoing funding crises of such massive infrastructure initiatives of the Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union projects like the 25-bed hospital and ring road occurred during the economic recession in Nigeria.
- Inflation and escalation of the prices of construction materials and services have compelled HTAs to find external alliances or government grants, not necessarily available.

This weakened financial position restricts the range, quality and sustainability of development projects and puts the credibility and performance of the associations at risk.

Management and Organizational Dilemmas.

The involvement of educated and powerful members, usually located in Urban centers or another country, is critical in the provision of leadership and strategic direction of the HTA. This dependency has brought succession and leadership complications especially whereby young generations express little enthusiasm or dedication to local development.

- There have been dissenting circumstances and factionalism within some HTAs such as witnessed in the renaming of historical changes in nomenclature of the Ifon Progressive Union and Ilobu Progressive Union.
- Challenges in generational differences between the older and younger elites to make decisions and become innovative is at times a problem for the developmental project since these decisions are not taken at the right time.

The continuity of effective governance structures and continuity of leadership is very important in terms of the long-term sustainability of HTAs.

Constraints Government and Policy-Related.

Although HTAs have in the past partnered with the government programs, this top-down method of state-driven development has tended to displace local programs in Nigeria.

- Post-independence rural development policies and plans such as those of DFRRI and MAMSER would sometimes impose administrative restrictions on HTAs which restricted their autonomy in project choice and implementation.
- Unpredictable government support and recognition have in other cases affected HTA projects as sometimes local authorities would not come up with equivalent grants or policy support to community infrastructures done.

Further, the activities of HTAs have occasionally been destabilized by political instability and rent-seeking activities found in post-colonial Nigeria and this has emerged as a threat to project sustainability.

Membership Problems and Socio-Cultural.

The social makeup of HTAs which initially was inhabited by men of high social standing and education has changed to become open to wider membership. Although this has democratized participation, it has also come with various expectations and diversified priorities, which could end up creating tensions.

- Women, who presently appear in the limelight, not only come with new outlooks, but also disrupt the established leadership patterns, necessitating changes in the governance structures.
- The members of the diaspora, whose input is usually vital, may be practicing an interest in urban or global development which may fail to meet the needs of a local community.

The only way these dynamics can be balanced is through strategic member engagements and participatory systems of decision making.

Technical Problems and Project Management.

Many of the HTAs must work in resource-bound settings, at the same time where the technical competence to execute large-scale endeavors is scarce. Challenges include:

- Poor technical planning and project execution, which may lead to an increase in infrastructure quality and durability.
- Problems with long-term project sustainability because of small maintenance capabilities and lack of formal management framework.
- The lack of monitoring and evaluating tools, which minimize accountability and make it impossible to learn out of the previous projects.

These complications highlight the importance of capacity development and professionalization in HTAs to increase the effectiveness of operations.

Sustainability Strategies

Nevertheless, there are numerous strategies, which have been put in place by many HTAs to achieve long-term sustainability:

1. **Diversified Funding Sources:** Open membership fees, diaspora remittance, grants and project-based funding will be used to reduce financial risks.
2. **Capacity Building:** Investing in project management through training in leadership, skills development as well as technical know-how to enhance efficiency in operations.

3. **Community Engagement:** Developing participatory strategies that involve the local members in the planning and decision-making processes and thus enhancing one becoming an owner and committed.
4. **Collaborations and Partnerships:** Cooperation with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other private sources to gain access to resources, technical knowledge, and policy support.
5. **Cultural Anchoring:** To ensure population support and community identity, the development efforts should be culturally aligned with the cultural values and traditions of the specific community.

Through these approaches, HTAs can be resilient and adaptable, which is why their development interventions will remain topical and effective even in the face of external and internal challenges.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Hometown Associations (HTAs) have remained a critical concern in the development of Southwestern Nigeria in socio-economic, cultural and political ways. These grass root institutions are so institutionalized in the associational life of African communities and especially among the Yoruba whereby making an identification with a town of origin makes them feel a sense of place and identity as well as the collective responsibility.

To fill in the provision of the public services, HTA has taken the form of a shadow state, in many instances having to fill in the gaps created by the lack of adequate infrastructure and social services, including schools, hospitals, roads, and postal services. The histories of such HTAs as Egbe Atunluse Ile-Ijesa, Ifon Progressive Union, Ilobu Progressive Union, Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union, Fiditi Progressive Union, Erin Progressive Union, and Egbe Omo Ibile Awe show the scale of their contributions to the education, healthcare, governing and economic development.

These associations are special in that they also incorporate high levels of local attachment, involvement of diasporas and structured leadership thus being able to mobilize resources of both materials and human beings for the benefit of community projects. Their involvement of the urban elites, the members of the diaspora, and more recently women, has increased their capacity and innovativeness in the development processes in their organizations.

Key Lessons from HTAs

1. **Resilience and Adaptability:** HTAs have implemented varied socio-economic and political transformations involving economic crises after colonialism, urbanization, and membership demographic changes.
2. **Community Mobilization:** HTAs mobilize community resources by recruiting through cultural and social identity and induce a feeling of community ownership of development projects, Moreso by generating civic engagement.
3. **Complementarity to Government Initiatives:** HTAs can work in conjunction with governmental initiatives such as DFRRI and MAMSER, which shows the importance of intermediary organizations in rural and urban development.

Challenges Revisited

Regardless of their success, HTAs have financial, leadership, technical, and policy-related issues, and it may constrain the sustainability and influence of various projects. These are: poor funding, leadership

succession challenges, political interference, Technology shortfall, and intergenerational or gender related friction in the membership.

Recommendations

To empower HTAs and to guarantee their further relevance and effectiveness, the recommendations are offered as follows:

1. Policy Support: The governments are expected to offer regular recognition and support such as matching grants, technical aid, and policy frameworks that will enable HTAs to undertake big community projects.
2. Capacity Building: The investment in the leadership, financial management, and project implementation trainings will promote efficiency in the operations and minimize the project failures.

Inclusive Participation:

1. to enhance decision-making, especially the active participation of women, young people, and diaspora members, to enhance intergenerational continuity, it will be advisable to encourage inclusive membership, especially active one.
2. Sustainable Financing Arrangements: HTAs will need to explore additional sources of revenue that can be generated by investing in different income-generating initiatives, strategic alliances, and diaspora remittances to mitigate their dependence on the membership fees only.
3. Documentation and Knowledge Transfer: HTA project and cultural knowledge will undergo systematic documentation to retain memory in institutions and be caused to be replicated in other communities.

Final Remarks

HTAs are a very important intersection between social cohesion, culture identity and development in Southwestern Nigeria. Their work offers empirical evidence that can be developed using community-driven efforts to attain significant developmental results, despite the conditions of limited and unequal governmental support. With a focus on internal and external challenges and by adopting strategic partnerships, HTAs can remain key drivers of sustainable growth of the region, cultural heritage and civil society.

Finally, the effectiveness of HTAs is that they combine tradition, community solidarity, and the present organizational practices. Since Nigeria is still struggling with socio-economic issues, the experiences of HTAs can be useful in terms of inclusiveness and sustainable development through local institutions and diaspora involvement.

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