

Community Development in Nigeria: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

This paper examines the Nigerian perspective of community development between 2010 and 2020. Specifically, it looks at the importance of community development in Nigeria and adopts an analytical and qualitative research method, relying upon secondary sources of information including researches, textbooks, journals and bulletins which provides essential frameworks within which better practice of community development can be evolved for appreciable corporate results in the Nigerian national development environment. The paper discovers that the extent of community development programmes in Nigerian society is positively correlated with the overall national development because most of the community development projects executed have contributed significantly to human and social capital development in Nigeria. It further observed that community development projects executed have impacted positively on the living condition of the people through the generation of employment opportunities and infrastructural provision. The study therefore recommended that there should be grant – in – aid schemes to rural communities by government as this will ensure a speedy initiation, implementation and funding of community development projects. The Nigeria governments should provide training on maintenance culture to all communities as a way of ensuring that the community projects executed are well maintained to last for a long time. The paper concludes that it will be a great wastage of human resources if the rural population are not given an opportunity to participate actively in the national development process for effective rural and community development.

Keywords: Community, Development, Impact, Rural, Self-Help

Introduction

In recent years the development policies of many African Countries have shown increasing emphasis on the community development generally. In East Africa alone, Tanzania's Ujama'a Vijijini, Kenya's Special Community Development Programmes, and Zambia's Independent Development Zones, point to the new emphasis on community development programmes. In West Africa, the third Nigerian National Development Plan, 1975 – 1980, also ranked community development high in its policy objectives.

According to the plan:

...it is necessary to recognize that about 70% of the Nigerian's population lived in the rural areas and have benefited relatively little from the rapid economic growth of the past few years. The improvement in the welfare of average Nigerian will therefore, require a substantial increase in rural income. Accordingly, in the course of plan



implementation, priorities will be given to programmes and projects directly benefitting the rural population, particularly, projects to increase the income of small holder's farmers and to improve the economic and social infrastructures in the area.

As mentioned in the plan, activities in the sector of community and rural development will take the form of self-help project by various communities under the aegis of their local government authorities with the state government providing technical and financial assistance whenever such projects are initiated. Such projects include the construction of village roads and bridges, markets, dispensaries, schools and other amenities directed towards the instrument of their localities (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1975).

Emphasis of the plan was on the provision of water and the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of an effective rural feeder road network for the eventual development of rural areas (Onilokim & Kumuyi, 1990). These resulted in the formulations of various rural development policies like, the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR), Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW), the River Basins Agricultural Development Programmes (RBADP) and the Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) amongst others. These agencies were created to encourage and aid self-help projects for rural development in Nigeria.

There is therefore, reason to believe that the question of how to accelerate the rate of development of the rural economy and how to improve welfare for the masses of the people in the rural areas is now the focus of considerable attention.

As Robert (1976), aptly puts it ... "the argument for given increased attention to community development in Nigeria is powerful and widely accepted". He advances four reasons for this: firstly, usually the overwhelming majority of the people lived and finds their livelihoods in the rural areas. Secondly, the drift to the towns (rural – urban migration), is a matter of concern, because of the increasing rate of Urban Unemployment, housing problems, increasing crime rates and other attendant social evils. Thirdly, it is in the rural areas that most of the disadvantaged people are to be found. Fourthly, there is a cluster of new orthodox economic arguments for given priority to rural development particularly, agricultural development. These reasons include the production of raw materials for industrial purposes, the feeding of growing population, and productivity of capital (the expected return on invested capital in agricultural production).

The increase in oil revenue beginning from the early 70's enhanced government capacity to play the dominant role in financing development projects and programmes. Community participation in development programmes became increasingly deemphasized. The dwindling and unstable revenue from crude oil sales which began in the late 70's signalled government's inability to single-handedly finance development programmes and projects. The Nigerian Government has had to rely on international financial institutions for funds to implement its programmes. This however was accepted with certain conditionality one of which was the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) adapted in 1986. One of the objectives of SAP was the substantial decrease in public expenditure and the encouragement of increased private sector participation in the economy (Ajakaye, 1999). In addition to

increased private sector participation, non-governmental social institutions have also started playing prominent roles in development efforts in the rural sector.

Basic objective of community development should involve the mobilization and allocation of resources available in the rural areas for the benefit of rural dwellers and for the general upliftment of their standard of living (Oluyori, 2009). However, rural development cannot occur without the active involvement and participation of the rural people in both the design and implementation of rural development programmes. Community development therefore has become a major tool for the attainment of genuine rural development. According to the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) communities should be able to identify their own problems, proffer solutions to them and make tangible contribution to the implementation of their own development programmes (Koinyan, 2008) . This suggests that they should have a say in determining the funds, materials, including personnel required for programme implementation.

In Nigeria which is essentially a mixed economy, the management model has been adopted for rural development programmes. Planning has largely been done by the bureaucracy for the people. The people are not involved in the planning for their own welfare. Most development programmes designed by government have not achieved the desired objectives.

The argument here is that for community development to be successful, the people must be involved in the planning of all projects and programmes for their communities. This raises their enthusiasm and ensures sustainability of development programmes.

On the basis of this backdrop, the study aimed at assessing the impact of community development programmes in Nigeria. To achieve this objective, this study is therefore, divided into two sections. The first section deals with the empirical review of literature on community development and its impact on the living condition of the rural population while the second section provides the discussion of findings. In this study too, references have been made to studies on the rationales for community development programmes in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Majority of Nigerians reside in rural communities. Unfortunately, these rural communities have suffered utter neglect and deprivations in the scheme of things for too long. They are in most cases denied basic amenities like electricity, water, good and motorable roads, access to healthcare services, formal education etc.

The challenges of transforming rural communities from this sorry state of affairs are quite enormous. Attempts by various governments to extend development to rural areas have not yielded much positive impacts. In fact, most rural development programmes, until recently, were geared towards agricultural development. This was borne out of the illusion that agricultural production will translate into rural development.

It is even more unfortunate that, even the local governments that are supposed to bring development to the grass-roots have failed in their responsibility to do so. At best, their efforts are concentrated in their Headquarters. Corroborating this assertion, scholars such as Omotosho (1998), Dahid (2008) & Okafor (2009), observed that the Nigerian rural



development strategy lacked a philosophical, ideological and holistic foundation. It had a body (policy-makers and government functionaries) but had no soul to give it life and sense of direction. The usual practice has been to be in office propounding slogans and manifestations for the people below. This practice has left the rural communities to suffer pervasive and endemic poverty, manifested by widespread hunger, malnutrition, poor health, general lack of access to formal education, liveable housing and various forms of social ills.

Given this scenario, rural communities are left to take the gauntlet of developing their areas. The ascendancy of Community Development Associations is borne out of this reality. Through community self-help approach, many communities are able to establish community banks, community schools, construct roads, build bridges, palaces, market stalls, and dwelling houses among many others. Indeed, we will be right to say that community development projects can excellently take place with or without government assistance or interventions.

Communalism was a key and community spirit of togetherness was simply exemplary in the people of Nigeria. This Practice corroborated with the ideology of Allen (2010), who opined that "...in all human affairs, there are efforts and there are results, and the strength of the efforts is the measure of the result". It is this philosophy that was also aptly captured by the late princess of Wales, Lady Diana (1992) who posited that, "every one of us needs to show how much we care for each other, and, in the process, care for ourselves, for self-help is the best help". At this juncture therefore, the problem which is the concern of this study is put in an interrogative form, thus; to what extent has community development projects impacted on the development of the rural population in Nigeria?

Conceptual Clarification

Development

An understanding of the concept of development however, will give a clearer picture of rural and community development. Therefore, its conceptualization suffices as Hornby (2000), defines development as the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced, stronger, etc. This definition implies that development involves a gradual or advancement through progressive changes. changes, which Umebali (2006) saw as multi-dimensional involving changes in structures, attitude and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth; the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. He further asserts that development involves economic growth component, equality or social justice component, and socio-economic transformational component which are all on a self-sustaining basis. Viewing the concept differently, Simon (2004) sees it as an improvement in quality of life (not just material standard of living) in both quantitative terms. He further opines that development must be seen as actually and temporally relative, needing to be appropriated to time, space, society, and culture.

Development involves change, improvement and vitality; a directed attempt to improve participation, flexibility, equity, attitudes, the function of institutions and the quality of life. It is the creation of wealth – wealth meaning the things people value, not just dollars (Shaffer,

1989). It leads to a net addition to community assets, avoiding the “zero sum” situation where a job created “here”, is a job lost “there”.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that rural community development is not a one-off thing or an immediate and snap phenomenon. Rather, it is gradual and progressive towards perfection having a set standard in mind. No wonder some scholars and writers referred to it as a process.

Rural Development

To conceptualize the concept of rural development, the characteristics of a rural area will suffice alongside variety of definitions of rural development from renowned scholars and institutions, which will be compared with the various definitions of the misconstrued concept of community development.

Outlining the characteristics of a rural area, Ekekpe and Ekpe (2009) averred “whether you are in the northern part of the country or in the southern part, you will be struck by the very level of abject poverty; mass illiteracy; unsanitized environment; lack of clean water supply; lack of access roads; unavailability of health care facilities; improper and inadequate housing; poor lighting particular at night; large family sizes; small income; defeatist/fatalist attitude; small land parcel ownership; out-moded ineffective farming implement etc. These conditions discourage the educated young persons from remaining in the rural areas. The result is unchecked rural-urban migration, thus further depleting from the rural areas, the human potential resources for development.

In line with the above characteristics of rural area, scholars have defined rural development variedly. For instance, Obinne (1991) perceived it as involving creating and widening opportunities for (rural) individuals to realize full potential through education and share in decision and action which affect their lives. He further views it as efforts to increase rural output and create employment opportunities and root out fundamental or extreme cases of poverty, diseases and ignorance.

Others like Olayide, Ogunfowora, Essang and Idachaba (2011) view it as means for the provision of basic amenities, infrastructure, improved agriculture productivity and extension services and employment generation for rural dwellers. Hence, Olayide et al (2012) see it as a process whereby concerted efforts are made in order to facilitate significant increase in rural resources productivity with the central objective of enhancing rural income and creating employment opportunity in rural communities for rural dwellers to remain in the area. It is also an integrated approach to food production, provision of physical, social and institutional infrastructures with an ultimate goal of bringing about good healthcare delivery system, affordable and quality education, improved and sustainable agriculture etc.

In terms of measuring rural development, Obot (1987) suggests that it could be measured in the areas of roads, water supply, housing, electricity, building of model communities, access to quality education, improved health care delivery and availability of food and agricultural products for the rural settlers.

Community Development



Unlike the misconceptualization in rural development, community development combines the idea of “community” with “development” hence the concept of Community plus Development. The concept of community has been described as a group of people with a shared identity. Thus, community development relies on interaction between people and joint action, rather than individual activity – what some sociologists call “collective agency” (Flora and Flora, 1993).

As an individual word, “development” is a process that increases choices, heralding new options, diversification, thinking about apparent issues differently and anticipating change (Christenson et.al., 1989).

Putting the two terms together, community development; means that a community itself engages in a process aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental situation of the community. The community is both the means and the end of community development. The community itself takes action and participates together. It is through this action that the community becomes more vital, not just economically but as a strong functioning community in itself.

Suffice it to say that in this context, these communities are connoted with the aforementioned and adumbrated characteristics of rural areas, equilibrating our concept of “rural community development”. We are however, not alone in this conceptualization, as Chukwuezi (2000:33) and Cavaye (2000) had lent their support when they wrote that “all rural developments are infact, community development”.

Historically, the notion of community development owes a great deal to the efforts of colonial administrators. Hence after the Second World War the British Colonial Office became concerned with 'community development'. Mayo (1975: 130) suggests that administrators 'concocted' the term out of their attempts to develop 'basic education' and social welfare in the UK colonies. For example, a 1944 report, Mass education in the colonies, placed an emphasis on literacy training and advocated the promotion of agriculture, health and other social services through local self-help (Midgley et al 1986: 17). This was a set of concerns similar to those surrounding the interest in rural development and educational 'extension' in North America in the first two decades of the century. Community development was defined in one UK government publication as:

active participation, and if possible on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to achieve its active and enthusiastic response to the movement (Colonial Office 1958: 2)

The concern with community development was, in part, a response to the growth of nationalism, and, in part an outcome of a desire to increase the rate of industrial and economic development. The notion began to feature strongly in United Nations documents during the 1950s - and these drew extensively on the British literature and experiences in Africa and India (Midgley et al 1986: 18). Three important elements were identified:

- i. A concern with social and economic development.
- ii. The fostering of capacity for local co-operation and self-help.

iii. The use of expertise and methods drawn from outside the local community.

Within this spectrum, there does appear to be a certain contradiction hence community development emphasizes participation, initiative and self-help by local communities but is usually sponsored by national governments as part of a national plan. While from one side it can be seen as the encouragement of local initiative and decision making, from the other it is a means of implementing and expediting national policies at the local level and is a substitute for, or the beginning of, local government (Jones 1977).

These contradictions are what prompted Okoli (1985) to assert “there have been various concepts of community development based on ideological orientation and the key concepts have not been well explicated and operationalized”.

Among the British Colonial Office, community development meant;

A movement to promote better living for the whole community, with the active participation and if possible on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming, by the use of technique for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the development. It includes the whole range of development activities in the districts, whether they are undertaken by government or unofficial bodies (1985).

The International Co-operation Administration sees it as:

A process of social actions in which the people of a community organize themselves for planning and action and the individual plans with a maximum reliance upon community resources and supplemented these resources when necessary with services and materials from government and non-governmental agencies outside the community.

The United Nation in its concept of community development sees it thus:

The term community development designates the utilization under one single programme of approach and technique, which relies upon local communities as units of action and which attempts to combine outside assistance with organized local self-determination and effort and which correspondingly seeks to stimulate local initiative and leadership as the primary instrument of change (United Nations, 1971).

Later writers, especially African writers started seeing community development as coterminous with rural development (Mbiti, 1972, Ebong, 1973 and Chukwuezi, 2000). This approach was informed by the fact that much of the African programmes on community development were really concerned with the rural societies. However, rural development is not coterminous with community development. There are quite some differences bearing in mind the socio-cultural environment. But one must add that all forms of rural development is community development, but not all forms of community development is rural development (Chukwuezi, 2000).

This is why, Cavaye (2000), supporting our claim, uphold that:

Community development is a process where local people can not only create more jobs; income and infrastructure, but also help their community become fundamentally better able to manage change. The “concrete” benefits of community development, such as employment and infrastructure, come through local people changing attitudes, mobilizing existing skills, improving networks, thinking differently about problems, and using community assets in new ways. Community development improves the situation of a community, not just economically, but also as a strong functioning community in itself.

Community development builds the five capitals of a community – physical, financial, human, social and environmental. It is through participation in their community that people rethink problems and expand contacts and networks; building social capital. They learn new skills, building human capital. They develop new economic options, building physical and financial capital. They also can improve their environment.

Fundamentally, Community development includes all strategies, interventions or coordinated activities at the community level aimed at bringing about social and economic development. It essentially, improves the ability of communities to collectively make better decisions about the use of resources such as infrastructure, labour and knowledge.

Evolution of Rural and Community Development

That community participation in rural development is an important element and a sure way to the speedy development of the rural areas in Nigeria is well attested to in development literature (Udoye, 2006 & 2007; Muoghalu, 2006; Okafor, 2014). The need to develop the rural areas and to a large extent, reduce the contrasting scenario of urban opulence and rural decadence has equally received ample documentation in literature (Hansen & Schulz, 2011). The evolution of the practice of community development activities has the following periodic dimensions; the pre-colonial, the colonial up to 1939, the period from 1940 to the Nigerian Civil War, the civil war years and the post-civil war years to the present democratic settings.

Before the onset of colonial administration, communities across Nigeria had employed communal efforts as the mechanism for mobilizing community resources to provide physical improvement and functional facilities in the social, political and economic aspects of their lives. Communal labour was employed in constructing homesteads, clearing farm lands, roads or path ways, construction of bridges and for the provision of other social infrastructural facilities required by the people. Some of the relevant institutions were the age-grades and the village councils. Though some of these institutions have persisted, the difference between self-help activities undertaken in the past and those prosecuted today are not hard to find. Differences exist in the scope of the operations, equipment utilized and the extent of government involvement.

As Idode (2009) observed, in the past, self-help efforts in Nigeria particularly in Benue-Plateau State which later metamorphose to Plateau State and now Nasarawa State mainly related to the construction of footpaths or roads, dredging of rivers and streams, clearing of public land and market places. Later, Idode (2009) further observed, the scope of operation



included the building of schools and market stalls. Projects such as pipe-borne water, road tarring, dispensaries, and cottage hospitals and so on, were not usually attempted and equipment used was simple; hoes, cutlasses, diggers and shovels were generally utilized. The construction of walls did not follow any standard measurements as the people used their imagination to plan and construct such projects. At this stage, there was little or no government involvement as the planning and execution of these self-help projects was the sole responsibility of the people. Where the government was involved at all, was for the purposes of taking over completed projects for operation or maintenance. But where neither the state government nor the local government councils were interested in such project, the missionaries took over.

In addition, Yahaya (2017) opined that mutual dependence prevalent in the rural societies enabled members to cope with the hazards of life in the absence of formal government organs and institutions. People relied exclusively on local resources and technology for the development of their communities. Evidence abound as to the existence of community development efforts to increase living standard. "Aikin Gayya" where all able bodied men in a community come together to farm and construct roads can be cited as a collective productive enterprise based on the principle of mutual dependence. "Gandu" is a system of agricultural production based on the family unit which gives cognizance to the mutual dependence of the rural population (Yahaya, 2017). In Nasarawa State for instance, we have "Oruma" in Alago Land which is a joint community productive effort. An organized banking system was also in place during the pre-colonial period. Thrift collection in the form of *Esusu*, *Adashi* or *Opa* which started in pre-colonial times is still thriving in the rural and urban communities in Nigeria today. In the health sector, healthcare services were administered by traditional healthcare providers free in most cases by family analysis and traditional healers (Emafo, 2010).

From the foregoing analysis of development efforts in pre-colonial Nigerian societies, the perception of modernization theorists that traditional approaches to development is backward and unprogressive is not true. In Contemporary Nigeria, the harsh economic realities faced by people have made them to fall back on traditional economic methods or ways of doing things especially in the health, agricultural and even banking sectors. According to Usman (2013), in the pre-colonial Nigerian societies, the amount of empirical and scientific knowledge possessed by the productive sectors of the population, particularly the peasant farmers and artisan specialists, was impressive, especially true of sciences like Botany, Zoology and Chemistry, where the knowledge comes from the practice of farming, gardening, animal husbandry and crafts like dyeing, tanning, glass and metal working. It is a fact that despite the introduction of new techniques of farming by various interventionist programmes of the Nigerian Government in collaboration with foreign capital, 68% of agricultural production in Nigeria today is done using traditional skills and methods (Oladumi, 2008). The argument here is that, for community development programmes to be successful, there is the need to harness the abundant, physical and intellectual capabilities and local resources in the rural communities. When people are involved in the planning process, they are likely to take interest in the resultant policies and use resultant facilities more responsibly and proficiently where local resources are utilized for development purpose. Sustainability of programmes is ensured as the resources are always available for exploitation.



The different political system that existed before colonial rule also facilitated the mobilization of both human and material resources for development purpose. Traditional Institutions served essentially as agent for interest articulation and or aggregation (Olaniyi, 2009). The fact that the traditional institutions were acceptable to the people and developed by them made it easy to use the institutions for effective mobilization of the people. According to Olaniyi (2009) the different Nigerian pre-colonial institutions had their forms of traditional authorities. For example, in the Eastern part of Nigeria, only male adults of particular age groups were involved in decision making. The Pre-colonial Yoruba Political System was based on the system of representative democracy with each unit being represented by a Chief. The Hausa Fulani had an arrangement in which political role was fused with religious functions. This enabled traditional rulers to easily gain the loyalty of their subjects.

In each of the three political system alluded to here, the leadership was rooted in the culture and tradition of the people. Decision makers were part and parcel of the rural community. Community members were carried along in the decision making process and as such it was easy to mobilize people for community development.

During the colonial period, community development efforts took a compulsive and coercive turn. The alien governmental apparatus with its clientele (Warrant Chief or District Officers) arrangement, extorted taxes and compulsory labour from the people; taxation by itself questioned the rationality of further labour conscription for road and other infrastructural development at the instance of the District Commissioner. The contradictions in the new development effort, therefore, did not fire the corporate imagination of the people and this was given expression by the tax debacle of 1929, popularly known as the Aba women riot. It questions the whole essence of the tax laws as established then, the imposition of the Roads and River Ordinance and the apparent shirking of development responsibility by a government that had already extorted taxes for this purpose.

Apart from the establishment of governmental exploitative infrastructural apparatus, linking the major seats of government through forced labour, no serious community development programmes eliciting popular participation was encouraged. Any development that occurred was a by-product of profit (Hancock, 2012). Nonetheless at very local levels, the family, interfamily and village settings, the pre-colonial trappings of mutual assistance through self-help persisted for the construction of homesteads, clearing farmlands, clearing water points and for providing other socially felt needs. Church organizations were also able to cooperate with members for the building of schools.

By the late 1940's however, an element of modern community concept in rural development was introduced in the form of mass mobilization for self-help activities. This was heralded by the abrogation in Britain of the Colonial Development Act which was replaced by the Development and Welfare Act in 1939. As rightly noted by Arndt (2011), this gave a positive economic and social content to the philosophy of colonial trusteeship by affirming the need for minimum standards of nutrition health and education. At the local level, the earlier Native Authority Councils (NACs) were replaced by the County Council (CC). Suffice it to say that this development led to the establishment of Community Development Division (CDD) at the local level and thus became an important organ of government, charged with the



responsibility of channelling and coordinating the efforts of the people towards promoting social and economic development (Onwuzuluike, 2017). The Development and Welfare Fund provided for the colonies by the British Government was thus able to permeate to the grassroots level through this third tier of government.

By the beginning of the war in 1967, the observations of Sir James Robertson, aptly typified the state of development needs and awareness and the immense role the governments expected community development activities to play to complement their efforts. After the Nigerian Civil War (1967- 1970), the need for massive reconstruction work further aroused the people a revival of the spirit of self-help which is deeply rooted in their rich traditions. Most communities realized that the only way for immediate reconstruction of the war ravaged facilities was through self-help. This period also marked the evolution of a multiplicity of social clubs with aims consonant with social insurance and self-help. Further efforts by government to motivate development at the grassroots led to the enactment of the 1976 Local Government Reform to create new growth centres for further spatial spread of development. In addition was the creation at the state level of local government service commission, the conferment of wider powers and functions to the Local Governments by the 1979 constitution and the enactment of the Special Development Fund Law, aimed at generating more funds for community development at the local level. Thus, deliberate government support became necessary to increase the spate of development activities by the various communities.

The period between 1979 and 2007 marked the peak of community development efforts in Nigeria. The period witnessed deliberate government efforts at mobilizing the people for rural development. A number of task forces and bodies were set up to oversee, organize and to direct partnership with the people on rural development activities. They include: Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural infrastructure (DFRRI), Rural Electrification Schemes; Credit Schemes to small holders through various specialized institutions such as People's Bank, Agricultural and Cooperative Development Bank, Community Banks, Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Credit Schemes, the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Universal Primary Education Schemes and Low Cost Housing Schemes, Health Scheme as the Primary Health Care Programme, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Better Life for Rural Women Programme as well as the Family Support Programme (FSP) (Olawepo, 2017).

More recent programmes include the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) as well as the Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Schemes (SMIEIS). The various state governments had also articulated blueprints on community development, adopting the Integrated Rural Development Strategy as their strategic option to carry development to the masses of the people. From the foregoing historical analysis, two principles underlying community development activities have emerged. These are (a) the principle of individual and corporate survival and (b) the principle of societal "felt need". These two principles have variously acted as the motive force in organizing and mobilizing the people in their pursuit of self-development.

Theoretical Framework





Because of the empirical nature and the objectives of this study, the theory adopted to guide this study is the mobilisation theory of development. Mobilisation theory came to prominence in the early 1970s and 1980s. The perspective of the theory adopted is specifically based on the Frank's (1979) mobilisation framework for the analysis of modern development process. The theory offers an account of the common feature to the process of development, drawing on the analysis of Frank (1979), Owen (1983) and other scholars.

The central proposition of mobilization theory is that development is the process of pooling together, harnessing, activating, actualizing and utilizing potential human and material resources for the purpose of development. It is a process where-by human beings are made aware of the resources at their disposal and also motivated and energized to collectively utilize such resources for the improvement of their spiritual and material wellbeing (Obanure, 2008).

The argument presented is that the mobilization model of development is best suited for the successful implementation of community development programmes. In the words of Frank (1979), the beneficiaries of programmes at the grassroots must be involved in the planning, staffing and coordination of as well as exercise control over, men and materials designed for rural-community development. In essence, people should be involved in the management of programmes and projects that affect their lives.

Quoting Frank (1979), Ujo (2008) argues that:

For planning to be successful, it must be bottom-up with negligible contribution from the bureaucracy. The technical aspects, which under the supervision of a state coordinating agency, must take into cognizance existing local skills and technology; the use of 'appropriate' technology must be emphasized by the coordinating agency as that is required from external contributions or stakeholders in community development.

According to Goulbourne (cited in Ajayi, 2009), the mobilization theory places threat emphasis on the importance of the community as an agent of mobilization, a dominant role is thus assigned to the stakeholders and the people in the formulation and implementation of development programmes. This model advocates the restriction of the role of public officials in the design and implementation of development projects for the rural communities. The role of the bureaucracy is reduced to a subordinate status. As already mentioned, the bureaucracy is reduced to respond to the popularly aggregated demand.

Where the people of the rural communities are involved in the provision of human and material resources to solve their pressing needs, their enthusiasm is aroused and sustainability of programmes guaranteed. The people equally have the benefit of improving in their traditional methods of getting things done.

Narrowing the analysis above to our study, community development projects in Nigeria is supposed to adopt such an approach which has been identified in development discourse. While the modernization model assigns a dominant role to the bureaucracy in the formulation and implementation of development programmes, the mobilization model emphasizes

popular participation in the development process.

Mobilization model should be the dominant ideology across the country if community development projects or programmes are anything to come by. This simply implies that community development policies are expected to be carefully designed and implemented by a bureaucratic network with the people and for the people. That is, activities in the sector of community development will take the form of self-help project by various communities under the agencies of their local government authorities with the state government providing technical and financial assistance whenever such projects are initiated. Such projects as the construction of village roads and bridges, markets, dispensaries, schools and other amenities directed towards the instrument of their localities.

The probable reason for this is that the process for development adopted for these rural areas should be self-generating for it to be sustained. As argued by one of the mobilization theorists Frank (1979) who sees development to be meaningful only when it is “self-generating and self-penetrating”. This suggests that community development projects and programmes should emanate from within the people (with government support) to be sustained.

As much as government advocates the development of the rural sector which is seen in terms of the injection of capital and technical expertise from developed societies into our society (underdeveloped nation) for it to develop; such development programmes must take cognisance of the indispensability of the roles of the community in decision making process as advocated by the mobilization movement.

The idea of self-help and communal assistance which forms the basis of the present day community and rural development among the rural dwellers is deeply rooted in the rich traditions of the African people in which evidences abound of how communities have, for generation successfully organized themselves to construct roads, build bridges, palaces, market stall, dwelling house among many others. Where the people of the rural communities are involved in the provision of human and material resources to solve their pressing needs, their enthusiasm is aroused and sustainability of programmes guaranteed. The people equally have the benefit of improving in their traditional methods of getting things done. This, indeed, is the crux of mobilization approach to community development.

The application of this theory to modern day community development can be based on diffusion theory as postulated by Staley (1968). Past studies on diffusion theory have shown strong influence of the awareness of ideas and innovation by a member of the community in which it spreads to all other members of such community. Also is the influence of distance on diffusion process which shows that a further away member of the society may not be aware of the innovation or ideas from the source on time unlike someone close to the source. Thus, this theory depicts an application to rural development through self-help projects by the process of social contract through spatial range and dimension and field of influence. A member of a community should develop an idea of community development through a self-help project and pass it down to other members of the community through community unions and associations in most cases. The expansion and diffusion process is most applicable in community development through self-help projects in which ideas, innovation and

communication spread spatially and temporarily until increasing number of individuals in the society became aware of the phenomena i.e. became aware of the need for self-help project(s) for rural development.

Empirical Literature Review

In this section, some empirical studies done on the aspects of community development projects and its impact on the living condition of the rural dwellers and the overall development of the rural communities in Nigeria are presented. The review focuses mainly on the works of scholars who have written and/or conducted research on the impact of community development projects and have suggested different ways or approaches in which community development can be successful improved in Nigeria. Notable among them includes; Alege (2002), Okafor (2008), Tanko (2010), Ayewa (2014), Oladuni (2015), Okwara (2016) and the host of others.

Ugoji (2008) conducted a research on the impact of community development projects on the living condition of the rural dwellers in Nigeria. The study used secondary data. Four hypotheses were developed to see the impact of all the independent variables on the overall wellbeing of the rural dwellers. The results show that community development projects initiatives have positive significant effect on living condition of the rural dwellers. It also presented a report on the impact of community development programmes on peoples' wellbeing and other development indicators using a meta analysis. The study yields a clear result that investment in community development programmes have a positive and significant impact on the rural development indicators. This result confirms the key role attributed to the investment in community development in the European strategy for rural and urban growth and development, Europe 2020, and the initiative agenda for new development strategies (European Centre for Rural Development, 2011).

Richard (2011) conducted a study to determine if improvement in the economic and social life of a specific group of people – rural poor is a driving force for investment in community development in the rural sector in Nigeria. The study relied on both qualitative and quantitative analysis of data, using descriptive and inferential statistics. The entire respondents of the 25 rural communities in Delta State as at 2007 in Nigeria were the population of the study and a total of 320 questionnaires were administered. The study found that improvement in the economic and social life of the rural poor is really one of the driving forces for investment in community development projects and/or programmes in the area.

Anyawu (2012) studied the impact of community self-help projects and rural development in Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State. The paper provides a review of the current evidence of such a relationship and offers suggestions for further investigation. They reviewed extensive the literature in terms of research findings from studies that had attempted measuring and understood the impact that community self-help projects have on rural development in Ohafia Local Government. The focal point of their review was to ascertain the significant role community development projects play in the improvement of the quality of life of rural dwellers and the relationship with rural development. The outcome of their findings varied. While some studies reported a positive association between community self-help projects and the improvement of the quality of life of rural dwellers, some reported

negative and some no association whatsoever.

Odonye (2008) conducted a study on the impact of community development projects on the well-being of rural dwellers in Otukpo Local Area of Benue State. The study revealed that community development projects brings greater confidence on rural poor, enriches their knowledge and increased their well-being, creates greater efficiency and effectiveness in project maintenance, increases their participation in development programme and promote higher quality of life. The study further revealed that there exists a direct relationship between community development and rural development.

Rastogi (2010) examined the role of community development in rural development in Nigeria. The study also pointed out the problems associated with community development programmes. The study concludes that community development and rural development is a long term and very sensitive functions of any society. Finally, the paper recommended that proper implementation of community development projects enhances individual well-being and societal growth.

Thang (2009) conducted a study on community development strategy and rural development in Nigeria. First, the study confirms that a positive relationship between community development and rural development exists, not only at the level of the rural dwellers, as demonstrated in previous studies, but also at national level. More specifically, community development will improve the knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviour of rural dwellers towards positive rural development. The major findings indicate that rural communities that implemented self-help projects in 2006 have increased their standard of living; the condition of the communities that implemented self-help projects after 2005 found it difficult to increase their quality of life by 0.32 percent and the general improvement of life per year between 2005 and 2006 due to poor planning. They concluded that rural settlers should pay more attention to community development policy if rural development is anything to come by.

Otabil (2016) sought to determine the impact of community development projects on the well-being of rural dwellers in Niger State People and Development Authority (NPDA) as a case study. The study assessed the strategy and development process of NPDA and whether community development has improved the quality of people's life in rural sector. He designed a structured questionnaire to collect primary data from members and employees of GPDA. Personal interviews were also held with some project management committee of the organization. The results indicated that the rural people were not well informed about the development programmes of the organization. Most of the respondents were of the view that community development is an effective tool for promoting both rural and urban development.

On the other hand, Sanusi (2012) carried out study on the impact of people's development strategies in Nigeria rural areas. The study argued that 37 poor communities in Nigeria in 1998 would have been among the developed society if some of the problems associated with their development like weak supervision, absent of people with expertise knowledge and necessary skills and poor planning were addressed through effective policies and development strategies to improve development efforts. Their findings from the study



reported a significant positive effect of community self-help projects on the living condition of the rural population.

Similarly, Ibrahim (2013) carried out an impact evaluation of community and social development project implementation in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The main objective of the study was to examine the impact of community and social development projects on the stakeholders in all the rural communities from the 13 local government areas across the three Senatorial Districts in Nasarawa State where there are completed and functional micro community projects. The findings revealed that an overwhelming majority of stakeholders were satisfied with their level of inclusiveness, degree of their participation in micro-project processes, the efficiency of the process followed in micro-project execution and the degree of access to services being provided by the micro-projects. Most importantly, access by youths and vulnerable persons to education was quite encouraging. Similarly, access of women to water, health and rural electricity showed signs of improvement. The results further revealed that community and social development projects implementation has also contributed tremendously to social capital development in Nasarawa State. The study concluded that community and social development projects implementation in Nasarawa State is achieving the desired results and satisfying the project development objectives in a modest manner as contained in the project documents. However, inadequate funding from the State and Local Government Councils as well as inability of communities to provide beneficiary contributions in a timely fashion still constitute serious challenges to the community development efforts.

Dakop (2012) in his effort to establish the relationship between community self-help projects and rural development in Nigeria conducted a study on the relationship between community development projects and rural development in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State. The objective of the study is to examine the relationship between community development projects improvements in several socio-economic indicators such as infrastructural provision, employment generation and income. The study draws on survey data from a sample of 293 respondents in ten communities in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State. Tables and simple percentages were used in the analysis. The findings revealed that community development projects are known to play a significant role in the improvement of the quality of life of rural dwellers. The role however depends on the extent to which community development scheme is adopted as a relevant strategy for rural development. Findings from the study further reported that there is a significant level of improvement in the socio-economic indicators of development; thus, leading to sustainable development.

In the same vein, Benedict (2010) carried out an assessment on the impact of self-help as a strategy for rural development in Nigeria. The objective was aimed at examining the imbalances in the living conditions of the urban and rural dwellers and the determination of the rural poor to bridge this gap through self-help development activities. The paper argued that the odds against rural development in Nigeria were rather immense. The configurations of government plans were tailored strictly to facilitate the exploitation of the natural resources of the rural areas for the development of the few urban centres. Consequently, most of the initial infrastructural developments in Nigeria were skewed in favour of the urban areas



to the detriment of the rural areas where the majority resided and inadvertently created a dualism. It was argued that since the government was “far” from the rural areas in terms of development and with the realization that government alone cannot provide all their needs, the people had to learn to “do-it-themselves”. The findings reported that this alternative strategy of self-help and the communitarian philosophy of the people has not only accelerated the level of growth but has also spread the benefits of development to the rural areas in Nigeria. The study concludes that, where the government is properly playing its expected role, self-help activities should complement rural development and not replacing it.

Other studies explored the impact of community development projects on the area of employment generation, infrastructural provision and income generation. For instance, Anyebe (2016) carried an empirical evaluation of community development programmes and concludes that community development projects have long been touted (both anecdotally and in the literature) to increase the economic development impacts of rural dwellers, but most analyses of community self-help projects have been based on expected results from hypothetical projects. His report provides a review of previous economic development analyses of community self-help projects and compares these projected results with empirical impacts from community development projects currently in operation in Nigeria. A review of existing literature reveals two primary conclusions. First, construction-period impacts are often thought to be comparable for both community and government-owned projects. Second, operations-period economic impacts are observed to be greater for community-owned projects. The majority of studies indicate that the range of increased operations-period impact of community development projects is greater than the operation impact of government projects.

Ekhator (2012) conducting a new retrospective analysis of operating community development projects in Kwali Area Council, Abuja, Nigeria finds out that total employment impacts from completed community development projects are estimated to be improving the quality of life during operations. In addition, when comparing retrospective results of community development projects on infrastructure impacts are two times higher compare to government established projects. Comparing the average of the completed community self-help projects studied with retrospective analysis of the government project in terms of income generation. The results also indicate that self-help projects have higher impacts in term of income generation to rural communities as much as compare to other projects established by government and other donor agencies.

Ujo (2008) studied the relationship between community development projects and the improvement of rural economies in Nigeria. The findings of the study reported that ultimately, community development projects are a source of jobs, income and economic development of the rural populace. From the findings, community development projects are shown to have increased positive impact both during the construction and operations-period of each project implemented. The extent of increased impact is primarily a function of local ownership and return on investment. The study however, blamed the ultimate challenges posed to community development on poor conception and implementation of the project concerned. The results suggest that, development policies that prioritize higher levels of local ownership are likely to result in increased economic development impacts generally.



Furthermore, the increased economic development impact of self-help projects as revealed in the study should not be undervalued. As the community development programmes has grown and approaches penetrations in many societies globally; it could provide a valuable strategy for building rural development support - especially in communities that are new to this approach.

Other studies also explored if there is a significant relationship between community development projects and rural development. Haskel (2003) found that higher involvement of citizen participation in development promote national development and the overall improvement of the people's life and is also associated with rural development which in turn better the higher quality of life in the rural sector. Mayhew (2003) has also found a strong relationship between different levels of citizen participation and the rural development. Colombo et.al (2008) found connections between more community self-help projects and rural development across a number of Tanzania rural sectors; while Adeniji (2002) found that increasing investment in self-help projects reduces the chance of rural degradation. Grip (2010) found that promoting community development projects had significant effects on the well-being of the citizen. Nwachukwu (2008) is of the opinion that rural development appears to be enhanced by the joint efforts of the people and the government. the result of his study reveals that community development projects has a high positive impact on the well-being of the citizen and reduces the problems of rural poor in the accomplishment of their development objectives.

In concluding this section, we which to restate that the review of empirical studies reveal that in the process of community development, the society needs to organize itself to satisfy their development needs. The self-help approach promotes awareness among the rural people to expand their capabilities to satisfy their functional needs and identify the problems that they encounter most in their lives. In other words, we are talking of the creation of an environment for the flowering of self which will then make it possible for this self to be the originator and designer rather than the passive receiver of these supposed goodies or items of modern development and civilization.

Community Development in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis

After a thorough review of empirical studies, the results showed that community development projects executed in Nigeria has contributed tremendously to social and human capital development in the country. For instance, it has reduced unemployment and other social needs. This does not mean that majority are employed because there is still a high rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Though it was however established that despite the rate with which community development is embraced among rural communities in Nigeria, rural backwardness still persists. This is evidence from the fact that illiterate groups are still found in the country.

It was also confirmed from the study that majority of the rural dwellers were living near zero income in Nigeria, but there is a considerable improvement in the income level of the people as a result of the community development projects embarked upon by them. This proves that self-help projects have led to the improvement of the living condition of rural dwellers, which is the essence of rural development.



It was also established in this study that there is a strong relationship between times related events and the motive force that sustained community development activities in Nigeria. These motive forces have been idealized to relate to (a) the instinct of self and corporate survival and (b) the societal felt need. It is these two principles, which are known to vary spatially and temporally, that govern the inner dynamics of community development activities and thus dictate the observed spatial variations in the attainment of economic well-being.

On the other hand, the findings revealed that in some cases, there is the problem of wrong developmental processes from the start of formulation to policy implementation. Some of these rural communities have not yet find effective policy and development strategies. In this case, human resources earmarked for development projects go down the drain.

It was also observed that the problem of community development programmes in Nigeria is attributed to poor political leadership. Political leaders that are people oriented to uplift the living conditions of the people are lacking. The likes of Julius Nyereres (the former Tanzania President) are conspicuously absent! Until when people with much desire of political leadership takes over the mantle of leadership, the rural communities in Obi Local Government Area will continue to suffer neglect.

The above findings confirms the position of Okpala (2008) that rural communities have different perceptions from that of the government as to what constitutes their development and as such they do not share government's enthusiasm for agricultural development. The communities undertake other types of projects that they think are more relevant to their felt needs and aspirations. Other communities believe: "that development entails a wide range of mixed activities and programmes include projects to improve health and education, to expand and improve transportation and communication and to improve the general civic infrastructures".

Finally, study reveals that the rural community derived special satisfaction from projects which they plan and execute through communal labour. They see themselves as being part and parcel of the community and actively contributing to its development. They are also delighted to see the practical fruits of their collective endeavour. Lastly, the high rate of embezzlement of public funds, which usually characterized the failure of governments' projects in Nigeria, is avoided in community development activities because the priority given to the projects and the collective nature of the contributions reduce the chances of misappropriation. These views are similar to those of Idode (2009) and Ibrahim (2013) on their reasons for the success in community development projects in the then Benue-Plateau State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, a conclusion could be reached that even though there is an avalanche of empirical studies on the impact of community development in rural development and the general improvement of quality of life in the rural areas, the existing evidence suggests that research in this area is promising. However, this study reveals that most of the Nigerian rural communities could not overcome the causes of their



underdevelopment due to shortage of financial and technical resources to be mobilized for community development coupled with the recent global financial crisis. Meanwhile, most of the challenges that had threatened the foundations of community development efforts in Nigeria had been squarely blamed on the lack of proper planning and implementation of needed projects.

The contribution of community development activities to rural development depends largely on the existence of committed local leaders in the rural areas concerned as well as the extent to which government encourages local planning and participation. The wide variations in the scope and impact of community development activities on the welfare of rural dwellers in different parts of the study area reflect the nature of community leadership and their inclination towards community development programmes. This implies that in those areas where there are no effective self-help groups, community development activities have not made much positive impact on the social welfare of the people. Sustainable development is what every community wants, and as of right deserve; anything less is not development. Our concern now is to apply same to definite community development activities of rural communities in Nigeria to see the impact of these dynamic forces in the attainment of projected goals.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the paper recommended that first, political leaders in Nigeria should look at those factors that serve as impediments to community development as discovered in this study in conjunction with others that are interrelated and act together to have a dampening effect on the community efforts in improving their environment with humane face. Government at all levels (federal, state and local governments) should not be committed only on papers to community development. This commitment has to be given expression in action and must be a reassessment of government roles in community development programmes generally with the aim of redirecting and integrating these towards goals worked out with communities.

Leadership is of the essence. We need good leaders at the rural community level; leaders who are visionary leaders who can carry their followers to their desired “Canaan” enthusiastically, leaders who are bold enough to “bell the cat”; the corruption cat.

In addition, government and other development agencies can continue to reach out to rural communities by offering technical expertise and financial assistance. This can be done with the objective to develop self-reliance in the individual and common initiatives in the village communities towards the improvement of their standard of living.

Community development projects should be well planned with respect to timing, finance, labour, accessibility to transportation means, raw materials availability, etc by community concerned; and in doing so, it is necessary to provide for maintenance of completed projects. The programmes planners should also consider the felt-needs of the people.

Government should show the necessary leadership by matching words with action through evolving workable rural community development approaches, proper co-ordination, funding and technical assistance. It should also encourage nation's experts to make useful



contributions with their talents. Government has a chief role of building and financing an enduring political, social, cultural and environmental structure on which community development can thrive, through the encouragement and recognition of the roles of cooperatives, NGOs, and private initiatives as their grassroots' appeals promote sustainable rural community development.

Finally, the rural communities in Nigeria should be encouraged to form more development associations, charging themselves with task of achieving the goals of community betterness. Also, the present programmes of National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDs), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Fadama III, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FERMA) and other related development programmes in the country should be properly encouraged to support community-driven development programmes of the rural communities in Nigeria.

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