

COMMUNITY AND GENDER PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The general objective is to determine why communities and women in Nigeria-participate so little in community development. The theoretical framework is anchored on the participatory theory. The participatory theory seeks to engage local 'population in the decision making process and Implementation of projects. Most manifestations of participatory .development. Seek to give the poor a part in. initiation designed for the benefit in the hope that development projects will be more sustainable and successful if local people are engaged in me development process. It is often presented as an alternative to **main** stream top down development approach. The methodology is based on anecdotal evidence. Drawn from qualitative and historical literative on rural development, community association 'and women, group in rural development. The study is primarily descriptive and analytical. The literature .review was .compiled from online sources textbook and oral interview, the findings. Show, that the government and local' government must work with the community development agents which are age grades, town unions, women groups and traditional institutions etc. in both the decision and implementation stages to achieve the desired goals. The absence of inclusiveness and gender inequality has not allowed full participation of the rural people; The research implication .is that development policies are made on the basis of top down development approach which does not give room for participation to take place from bottom., because of the. Top down, development approach. The research revealed that community Driven Development (CDD) approach is the favored type of rural participation in rural development programme. The originality and value of the research is based on the fact that the CDD strategy guarantees equal opportunity for both males and females to engage in community activities thereby reducing the gender gap, enhancing productivity and increasing the contribution of rural community members especially women. The government. Should foster interest in rural development projects among rural population by providing in centives grounded in the principles of objectivity, honesty, transparency, justice, accountability and stewardship.

Keywords: Community-driven development, Community participation, gender equality, and sustainable development and self-help groups

1. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, there are essentially two methods for developing rural areas: community-driven development (CDD), also known as the non-directive approach, and the directive approach. With little to no participation from the rural populations, the government initiates and implements development projects in rural regions under the directive method, which is a government-driven strategy for rural development. Sustainable Development Goals, Millennium Development Goals, and Fadama Development Projects are a few examples. As opposed to relying on the government or other international or charitable groups, the non-directive or community-driven development model encourages a community or group to take the initiative to develop their own community.

Some have said that because this non-directive strategy, guarantees rural communities' involvement and buy-in in development projects within their villages, it is a superior strategy for rural development. For example, the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (1998) noted that, in contrast to the traditional top-to-bottom method, the CDD approach has shown to be more successful in raising the living standards of rural areas. According to the CDD model, the real representatives of the people make decisions that have an impact on the communities. These people include peer groups, women's groups, producers' unions run by cooperatives, and traditional organizations. The community leaders can also make use of the resources at their disposal to satisfy the requirements of their communities in terms of roads, schools, maternity centers, drinkable water, etc. by using the CDD strategy.

Funds required for community development initiatives can be found or acquired in a variety of ways. Some of the methods that could be investigated or used to raise money for community development projects are as follows: payment for levies imposed by community members and organizations; grants from the government, grants from local and intervention donor agencies, sales of community resources; payments for royalties; remittances from sons and daughters living overseas (town unions); loans; payment by property developers; and returns on community investments (Adopjn 1976).

Imhabekhai (2010) asserts that citizen participation promotes development and growth in any society. It clearly benefits both the person and the community.

Among these are:-

1. It enhances the person's process and capacity for choice by allowing them to engage in their own socio-political and economic development.
2. It makes representative members more aware of how to address their shared issues and meet their own demands.
3. It satisfies man's needs for creativity, relatedness, a sense of community, and a framework for looking forward to a happy future.
4. The process of citizen involvement gives people the chance to learn from one another, break harmful habits, and discover new strategies for upholding their human rights and enhancing their lot in life and the conditions in which they live in their community.
5. It facilitates activities and involvements that push people to broaden their horizons, learn new ways of thinking, become more industrial and imitative, and engage in exchanges. That, make them question the attitudes of local authorities.

6. It provides democratic leadership and selection process training.
7. It improves and fortifies community control, improving the quality of life for both residents and the communities in which they live.
8. It encourages both individual and group accountability in the 'community and, serves to foster improved problem-solving skills among community leaders who have Competing interests, a variety of demands, and quickly evolving programs. (Ljebu-Odeh. Justice. Development and Peace Commission)

The fact that women are given priority in rural development is another obvious benefit of the CDD strategy over the government's directive approach. Stated differently, the CDD strategy. Guarantees that men *said* women have equal opportunity to engage in societal issues. Arisi and Aghure (2010).assert that equal opportunities for both genders to participate in' the': political and economic life of the community and the abolition of gender discrimination are' necessary for sustained rural development.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Nigeria, attempts to improve local communities through top-down, government-sponsored initiatives have historically failed because of limited or nonexistent engagement from vast sectors of the .rural population, particularly women. Rural community members' contributions are diminished and productivity is decreased by gender. Disparity and community exclusion, particularly for women. Moreover, productivity losses result in significant costs for the. Economy (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2013). Gender, equality•-and community involvement are two of the elements that can change rural communities and the cultural .process of human development, claim inglehart and Welzel. (2005).

According to a study by Ntunde (2004), women perform 70% of the labor in agriculture, 50% of animal husbandry and related activities, and 60% of food processing in the. Majority, of rural communities in Nigeria. However, women only, have access to less than 20% of the agricultural resources available, which poses a significant barrier to their ability to maximize *their* economic potential. Women's participation in rural development is impacted by their lack of involvement in decision making within the household and the community at large. As: a result, women are much less likely to accept and support community development initiatives.

Despite the achievements made by women in the agricultural industry, their contribution to social stability and economic progress is still underappreciated. The following elements are in charge:

- a) Nigeria's male-dominated culture, which places women in a lower social status, -
- b) Social norms that hold women in subordination to men, such as taboos and the prohibition against women owning land.
- c) The issue of women engaging in productive but unpaid work on the home front (The 2006 National Gender Policy)

Gap in Literature

Unfortunately, there is no study yet in Nigeria that have explored the impact of community participation and gender participation in rural development using the framework of community-driven development (CDD) approach. This study will fill this important empirical gap in literature on rural development in Nigeria.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study's main goal is to determine why communities. And women in Nigeria participate so little in community development initiatives. The following are the specific goals:

- a) Determine whether the limited participation in community development is attributable to the top-bottom development strategy.
- b) Determine whether the low level of participation in community development is attributable to the government's inability to promote it.
- c) Analyze the ways in which gender inequality has lowered women's acceptance and involvement in community development.
- d) To examine the extent to which, community participation serves as a strategy of rural development in Nigeria. .

1, 4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions will guide in the attainment of the research objectives:

- a) How much of the poor participation in community development may be attributed to the top-bottom approach?
- b) Is the low level of community development engagement due to the government's incapacity to promote it?
- c) To what degree has low participation in community development been influenced by gender inequality?
- d) To what extent has the community participation served as a strategy of rural development in Nigeria?

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Design

With anecdotal evidence drawn from qualitative and historical literature on rural development, community development associations, and women's participation in rural development in over 250 linguistic groups in Nigeria from precolonial times to the modern era, the study design is primarily descriptive and analytical. The study's literature was compiled from online resources, periodicals, and textbooks. These were supplemented by oral interviews (stakeholder interviews and group discussions conducted by development organizations, women's groups, community development associations, and traditional rulers in traditional Nigerian communities) Local Government official from the ministry, of rural development.

3.0 DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Finding/Results

Findings show that there are three principal actors in community development in rural areas in Nigeria. These include the self-help groups, government sponsored projects and the women group. The goal is to completely involve rural residents in the creation and execution of programs intended to enhance their social, political, economic, and cultural well-being through their town unions, age grades, and other like groups. They will be able to positively impact future rural and national development as a result. The achievement of self-reliance will result from the local population's effective participation in rural development. Therefore, the focus will be on a coordinated strategy to mobilize the populace and their resources,

through age grade, town/community unions, and other. Comparable groups-working in conjunction with the local authority, or local government. In addition to helping to harness the potential resources of the local population for development, this direct involvement will foster a sense of patriotism, active civic culture; and leadership development (Onyishi, 2010). In contrast to the MDGs and SDGs, which were founded on a top-down, non-community-based development approach, the Fadama development programs were based on a CDD development approach. This must have been, the outcome of the government implementing the projects incorrectly, which led to low project assessment scores.

The primary barrier impeding the government's planned all-inclusive approach to community development and sustainable rural development has been, gender inequity. This is so because social welfare, environmental conservation, and social equality are the three pillars upon, which sustainable development is built.

3.2 theoretical Framework

Participatory Theory

The theory was developed by Charles Tilly and Doug McAdam in (1970). The participatory theory seeks to engage local populations in the decision making process and development projects. Participatory theory has taken a variety of forms since it emerged in the 1970s, when it was introduced as an important part of the 'Basic Need Approach' to development. Most manifestations of participatory development seek to give the poor a part in initiatives, designed for their benefit in the hopes that development projects will be more sustainable and successful if local populations are engaged in the development process. Participatory theory has become an increasingly accepted method of development practice and is employed by a variety of organizations. It is often presented as an alternative to mainstream 'top-down' development. The definition of participatory Theory is premised along two different dimensions. There is the Social Movement Perspective and the Institutional Perspective.

The Social Movement Perspective defines participatory theory, as the mobilization of people to eliminate unjust hierarchies of knowledge, power and economic distribution. The Institutional Perspective defines the theory of participation as the reach and inclusion of inputs by relevant groups in the design and implementation of inputs and opinions of relevant groups and stakeholders in a community (Norman, 1972). (Hassa & Ibrahim, 2023).

The research revealed, that community-driven development (CDD) is the favored method, for rural development, as it enables stakeholders to receive contributions that impact their daily lives. The CDD technique, in contrast to the traditional top-down method, has demonstrated greater efficacy in enhancing the status of the populace by ensuring authentic representation.

The CDD approach enables the community leader to use available resources, to address the requirements of the community in terms of providing schools, roads, and other necessities.

The CDD strategy guarantees equal opportunities for both males and females to engage in community activities, thereby diminishing the gender gap, enhancing productivity, and increasing the contributions of rural community members, particularly women.

Collaboration is essential in the structuring of rural communities. Government support and assistance are necessary for. The cooperative to leverage indigenous. Capital, for enhanced agricultural and community development. When the impetus for community self-help- does not originate from, the populace. The government should foster interest in .rural development Projects among rural populations by providing incentives, grounded in the principles of objectivity, honesty, transparency, justice, accountability, and stewardship.

3.1 Self-Help Groups

In Nigeria, implementing self-help projects for community development is a highly respected custom. As a part of an age group, a guild, or an extended family, each individual in the community had a part to play in the growth of the community in traditional society. Since the government is now officially in charge of providing public service, individual involvement is now entirely voluntary. It is mediated by a number of volunteer organizations, the most common of which are "town unions" or community development associations! Cooperative societies and youth associations are among the others. Local authorities, such as age grade, describe their self-help initiatives for the advancement of their distinct communities.

Graf (1980), has argued that the early colonizers in Nigeria had planted the negative ideology. Mean to impede community development and keep Nigeria perpetually dependent on their. colonizers. He added that leaders in the current Nigerian state also employ this same, strategy to maintain inequality and dependency of the citizens on their leaders. Like the colonial pioneers, the Nigerian leaders make policies that preserve their greedy selfish interest while leaving their subordinates in abject poverty.

In his fieldwork on self-help initiatives carried out in Benue' State, Onyeozu (2007) noted a similar pattern in the undertakings of different villages. Chiefs and Traditional Heads were appointed honorary Chairmen of development areas in Ankpa .Local Government Authority, 'Benue State, to encourage self-help initiatives. During the 1968-1978 research period, non-governmental initiatives were used to launch and carry out economic and social amenities including establishing schools and health centers and roads. These projects were funded by donations and free-will offerings from kindhearted people and organizations... Although Nnoli (19.80) views self-help as a viable alternative to relying, oh "government-or; foreign. Aid, .it .has really remained a contentious method for community development. Individuals and groups within the communities can pool .their resources to meet their basic, needs and raise their level of living rather than continuing to suffer from, a lack of amenities. Brought on by the leaders actions of just caring about their own self-interest.

In many less developed nations, the current trend in co-operative organization in rural regions, according to Onokerhboraye and Okafor (1994), has been the-formation of multipurpose movements incorporating marketing thrift, credit, and the delivery of agricultural supplies. This/multifunctional organization could be a beneficial establishment for rural development. These kinds of cooperatives' need to have strong leadership, efficient administration, and entrepreneurial ability, all of which take time to develop. Nonetheless, they are essential to the accomplishment of cooperation. Government backing and assistance are needed for cooperatives to raise indigenous money for better community and agricultural development.

A key component of agricultural diversification is raising the standard of agricultural output while also making sure that it is used in a way that benefits rural populations in the industrial sector. The development of agro-allied industries, such as cashew, vegetable oil, starch, palm kernel, and palm oil milling, is necessary to complement agricultural development. These businesses are focused on the extraction and utilization of agricultural products. The government ought to help farmers in rural areas acquire contemporary farming equipment.

3.4 Government Sponsored Projects

The following development projects were implemented by the federal, government of Nigeria in partnership with international organizations like: World Bank, African Development Bank, United Nations and Food and Agricultural Organization etc. they include:

a) Fadama Development Projects

Fadama development project: the Hausa people have, a long-standing custom of using flooded land for small-scale irrigation and the cultivation of a range of crops. According to Ajayiet Nwalieji (2010), the terrain is suitable for irrigation, fishing, and providing food and water for cattle. Fadama was founded in 1993 and lasted until 1999 while the Food and Agricultural Organization came up with the concept in 1990. Farmers noticed a 65% increase in revenue from a variety of crops when new irrigation systems that were easy to use and affordable were widely adopted. 2001. Fadama I's limitations were addressed by the federal government's new rule-development strategy, which led to the creation of Fadama II as a follow-up. Fadama II's emphasis on reducing poverty, advancing the private sector, and taking a participatory approach to rural development aligned with the strategic objective of the African Development Bank. Fadama II emphasized the values of equity in access to land benefits for the region, consistency, sustainability, and non-intervention (Ezike 2000). Following Fadama II, the federal government sought to support farmers and other stakeholders in forming financially viable Fadama groups. This led to the creation of Fadama III, which aimed to boost farmer incomes, lower rural poverty, improve food security, and support rural development.

A change in development strategy from the public sector's dominance to a community-driven development (CDD) approach was implemented in the Fadama projects. The private sector, spearheaded the initiative's provision of production, marketing process financing, and advice services to project clients. Farmers and other interested parties received assistance in forming economically superior Fadama groups (Eze 2000). Fadama III additional funding: The Nigerian government sought to extend the success of Fadama projects I, II, and III to the Agricultural Transformation Agenda, which prompted the additional funding. Beginning in 2015, Fadama III extra financing supported the value chains of horticulture, rice, sorghum, and cassava in six states, with the surrounding states acting as catchment areas to feed the processing zones.

The yearly income of Fadama farmer's benefits and limitations of Fadama showed that 50.0% and 33% of respondents, respectively, identified access to loans and agricultural information as additional benefits to participation in the Fadama Project. This may have led to higher productivity recorded by Fadama participants than non-participants.

b) The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000-2015 bind world leaders to fight against environmental degradation, poverty, hunger, sickness, and discrimination against

women. For example, they failed to include all the components required to realize the goals outlined in the 2000 Millennium Declaration. Despite the fact that the majority of farmers worldwide are impoverished, the MDGs did not particularly address agriculture. As a result, there was little local participation, which was a grave mistake given the top-down approach to development. The 2005 score chart showed that the programs' overall low performance was caused by the exclusion of the chairmen of the local government councils. Who would have coordinated the councils' programs through town union, presidents-and other groups interested in community development. The CCD approach, to development, which world leaders had envisioned in the 2000 MDGs statement, was not adopted by those in charge, of implementing the programs in Nigeria.

Sustainable development Goals 2015-2030 the targets were a compilation of the 17 global objectives that the UN had established in 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were created to replace the Millennium Development Goals, which came to an end in 2015. They address a wide range of social and economic development issues, such as poverty hunger, health, education, gender equality, water, sanitation, energy, urbanization, environmental, and social justice (bleint 2015). The incomplete MDG projects were to be carried over into the SDGs. Nigeria earned 47.01 percent, ranking 43rd out of 52 countries the 2020 Voluntary African Assessment Dash Board; five years after the country adopted the SDGs. Nigeria has a low grade of 54.27 out of 100 in the SDGs report 2024, placing it 146th out of 166 countries that subscribed to the goals despite having abundant economic and human resources. The isolation of rural residents from participation in decision-making and participation is one factor contributing to the low results. This resulted from the top-down strategy that experts discouraged when the MDGs expired in 2015. The majority of the North African nations that achieved great success did so primarily through the adoption of the CDD development approach.

3.5 Women in Rural Development

According to Ogunjimi (1984), a traditional woman is a multitasked in the home serving as the chef, the washerwoman, the cleaner, and the nurturer of the family. Emuakpor (1981) states that in addition to domestic and family responsibilities, women in rural Nigerian communities shoulder the majority of the customary workloads associated with labor in agriculture, animal husbandry, food processing, and the scarcity of fuel and water. It goes without saying that traditional women put in more hours at work than men do.

Agriculture: Because of the rural culture of Nigeria, women are expected to, support their immediate families through peasant farming, while men work in less labor-intensive jobs for higher wages. Women are involved in "planting activities, such as land preparation, digging, and plowing, followed by planting the seeds, cutting, hoeing, and weeding," according to Okeyo (1979). In rural areas, women make up between 60 and 80 percent of the. Agricultural, labor force.

Animal Husbandry: Animal farming activities carried out by women in Nigeria include grazing, milking cattle, and pastoral cattle farming, which entail relocating, the cattle in search of grass. In certain regions, women obtain their -animals either purchasing them or receiving a female animal as a gift from someone, allowing them to share the- offspring equally if they procreate (Aguene 1998).

Distributive Trade: Women actively participate in the purchase and sale of goods. This entails going to places where obtaining these things is -inexpensive .and then returning to the location where they are sold for a profit. In Nigeria, women predominate not only ¹in the purchasing and selling of products but also in the provision of services. They provide services like hair styling, weaving textiles, and catering.

Health Services: Women predominate in the nursing and midwifery fields within the health sector. In addition, they take part in cleaning up their houses, churches, shrines, village squares, and other communal social hubs. In rural hospitals, they are renowned for their ability to remain near a sick relative; women typically tend to family wounds. They are Compassionate-and helpful to the poor (Aguene, 1998).

Political Activities: Nowadays, a small percentage of women are elected to the state, local, and federal houses of representatives as members of the legislature. There are female chairpersons, commissioners, advisers, ministers, and other, positions in local government.

Social Organization

Women are empowered through their own organizations to enable them decide on the issues that affect their lives and the wider community. Wives of President of the country, Governors of states and Chairmen of local government areas make their impact on rural Women through their social organizations. Two organizations that heed our special attention are better life for rural women of late Mariam Babangida in 1987 and family support programme in 1994.by. Mrs. Maryam Abacha. These two programmes were carried out throughout Nigeria to better life of rural dwellers .especially Women and their children. Apart from raising the awareness of women about their rights and obligations they were also, introduced to skills acquisition, credit facilities through their asocial and establishment of cottage industries. Empowerment of women reduces social inequality and make them to accept and contribute to rural development.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

Our goal should be to establish a stronger link between poverty and sustainable development. Increasing the riches of the already wealthy while the impoverished continue to get poorer is not sustainable growth. Instead, it means tackling poverty at the source, right there in society. Given their inherited rights; women should be involved in decision-making and encouraged to join .groups that promote economic empowerment since it fosters social, political, and religious, empowerment among other things. To .prevent sexual harassment of women, meetings for rural development should not.be scheduled for late hours or in solitary locations. This is true because social equality, economic prosperity, and environmental protection are the three-pillars that support sustainable rural development. When a community self-help project is not initiated by the people, the government should encourage public interest in rural development initiatives by providing incentives to those who live in

rural, areas. Similar, to the Eungu State Government's one community, one project policy, wherein a community, democratically selects one project and the government contributes a significant portion of the project's cost.

Increased awareness campaigns are necessary, particularly in light of the April 30, 2014, Supreme Court ruling regarding women's rights to inherit their late dads' personal property. Without a doubt, this will end the feminization of poverty among women.

4.2 Recommendations

On the strength of the findings we made the following recommendations:

- a. Bottom-Up. Approach: Community participation is concerned with the process of ensuring that the intended beneficiaries of development projects and programmes are themselves involved in the planning and execution of those projects and programmes. This is considered important as it empowers the recipients of development projects to influence and manage their own development, thereby removing any culture of dependency.
- b. Enlightenment and awareness Campaign: Government should constantly engage in enlightenment and awareness campaign because it is only when government embark on this that the community dwellers should be able to understand the efficacy of their involvement in government activities. In this process Mass Media and Town Criers plays a pivotal role in educating the people on the need to participate in their development process.
- c. Educational Empowerment: Education should be given to the people who are living at the community level. This is because educational empowerment will enhance the capacity of people to participate and influence development policies at the local level.
- d. The local government should find way of encouraging its people to engage in rural self-help programme so that they can give their own contribution in terms of idea and material support for development.
- e. Government has to regularly call for town hall, meetings and training of community leaders on how to go on the enlightenment and awareness campaign:
- f. People should be encouraged to initiate self- help community projects whereby the decisions, planning and implementation -and the maintenance should be the responsibility of the community (Hassan & Ibrahim 2023)

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SUPPLEMENTARY FILE

DATA ANALYSIS

The questions for both the interview and focus group discussion were raised from the following research questions.

- a. How much of the poor participation of rural people in community development may be attributed to top-bottom development approach.
- b. Is the low level of community development engagement due to the governments, incapacity to promote it.
- c. To what degree has low participation in community development being influenced by gender inequity.
- d. To what extent has the community participation served as a strategy of rural development in Nigeria.

The questions were both open ended and close ended. The open ended were included because they allow for a wide range of possible answers and encourage respondents .to provide detailed personalized responses.

Quality .data were collected through methods of observation, one to one interviewe, in-dept interviewe with key informants. These were done.by talking to respondents, video recording the interviewed, observation, or focus group discussion were mainly when project is going on or through zoom.

The selection of the respondents was based on availability method.

Many, of the .respondents and discussants believe that the top down development has not made rural people to be committed to what they do. This is because their priority is not

known. The implication is that if a sitting government abandons project rural people will not continue because they did not see the project as theirs.

Some of the respondents behave that the government should stimulate, the interest of the rural people like -the Enugu State Government policy of one community one project. The community will choose one project democratically and the .government will pay part of the cost of the project.

Majority of the respondents/discussant believe that much of the progress of the rural communities were done through self-help projects.

Many projects have been abandoned because the rural people were not included in the planning and implementation stages so the projects are government, projects that is why - when the project are abandon the people also abandon the project.

Majority of respondents believe that because of tops to bottom, development approach. There is a wide gap between the government development and the need of the people. Majority of respondents are of the option that the exclusion of women in decision making and gender in quality reduces Women acceptance and participation in rural development. The -local Government has the third, tier of governments not unitized the community development agents in the rural communities. The rural communities are excluded in the administration of the local government areas.

Majority of the respondents believe that much of the progress in rural development were done through self-help project. Many project have been abandoned because the local people were not included in the planning and implementation stages so the projects are government projects and that is why when the project is abandon by the government the local people also abandon the project because they are not committed to the projects.

Cover letter

I Dr. Ignatius Nnamdi Agenene hereby, state that the above article Gender and .Community Participation Sustainable Rural Development in Nigeria has not been submitted to any journal for publication.

I promise to pay for the cost of publication if my article is accepted for publication. ; I am the only author and was not sponsored by any organization.

I have no conflicting interest. My personal institutional email is aguenennamdi@goum.edu.ng

Access to data materials

Data .availability statement - share included in supplementary file.

The data that suggest the findings of the study are openly available in the supplementary file. The author confirms that the data supporting the findings of the studies are available in the supplementary file.

Data availability statement

The data method used in the analysis and materials used to conduct the research is thematic analysis because it involves identifying, analyzing and reporting pattern, within the data which is included in the supplementary file.

Official school website

-<https://www.gouin.edu.ng>