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**CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the challenges of community development in Nigeria. The lofty goals embedded in community development is being hindered by ravaging poverty and illiteracy, lack of information, economic challenges, social inclusion as well as some cultural factors in the country. Relying on qualitative methods of analysis and second sources of data collection this paper shows that measures such as learning about the community, listening to community members, access to information and issues, developing an action plan and implementing an action plan as well as evaluate results of actions can ensure effective community development in the country. The paper, therefore, concludes that for rapid community development should be considered as crucial to national development. Hence it is necessary to encourage community initiatives for self-determination and development because the federal and the state government cannot adequately provide enough for community needs.

Keywords: Community, Development, Poverty, Challenges, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of community development arises from device settings and sources across the globe. However, the origin of community development could be traced to reforms in the social movements in North America and Britain in the latter half of the 18th century were the principles of community development was formulated and applied in the decolonization process of the third world countries. Community development was further enhanced because of its democratic values and its capability to carry the majority of the people along, though not all voices are heard in most cases. Certainly barriers such as age, poverty, ethnicity, and race, are responsible for the slow pace of community development practices. However, the recognition of the diversity inherent in every community and the respect of the fundamental right of each member to participate in the discussion of issues that concern them and the community, in general, makes a healthy community. A situation where members of the community gather to proffer solution to issues that concern them, after considering series of options before arriving at a conclusion encourages participation and promote healthy community development action plan, for the achievement of community development goals.

Community development in Nigeria can be traced 1946 during the colonial rule. It can also be traced to the activities of Non-governmental organizations that sprang up immediately after political independence in 1960 and the protest against military regimes by civil society organization from 1966 to 1999. In fact, the Centre for Constitutional Governance the initiative of late Dr. Beko Ramsom Kuti was among the first vibrant Nongovernmental organizations that campaigned against the military, unconstitutional government and the need for community development in Nigeria.

The stakeholder's participation in community development most often serves as effective mitigation measures. Absence of stakeholders' participation community development affects community development because of lack of regular stakeholders' participation provides avenue for ineffectiveness and efficiency, lack of communication and documentation of projects aims negatively affects the quest for community development (Wawira & Susan., 2019). In spite of this campaign, there is no doubt that the political leaders and the Nigerian government have not only recognized the importance of vibrant community development which is mostly

needed in the rural area of the country where 70% of the citizens reside (Egbe, 2014). Therefore, the thrust of this paper is to explore the core challenges of community development in Nigeria, by establishing those drawbacks to an effective development of the communities as well as provide ways of raising the livelihood of the people in various Nigerian communities. The paper is divided into 5 sections and conclusion, namely: introduction, an understanding the potentials of the community development, evolution of community development in Nigeria, and contemporary challenges of community development, mitigating the challenges of community development, and conclusion.

UNDERSTANDING THE POTENTIALS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Sometimes community-based programs, community interventions, community research are frequently referred to as community development. According to Adedokun et al. (2010:101) “Community development is the process of helping a community to strengthen itself and develop towards its full potential”. Similarly, Adedokun (2008) sees community development as the gathering of an individual or group of people in a community to plan and act jointly for the satisfaction of their needs for the overall desire of bringing meaningful change to their lives and that of their community through their cooperative efforts. Community development is often distinguished from other forms of community works through its values and democratic principles, inclusiveness, and community self-determination. The United Nations sees community development as an effort made by the people in conjunction with the government authorities aimed at improving the cultural and socio-economic conditions of their being as well as to enable them to contribute meaningfully to their immediate environment and the nation at large. Community development is that organized and planned attempt aimed at assisting individuals and groups to acquire needed attitudes and skills for their full participation in the broad provision of an effective and practical solution to community problems at a point in time.

Community development helps to improve and empower groups of people and collection of individuals as well as by providing them with the needed skills required to improve wellbeing through

the establishment of larger social groups working for a common agenda of the community and the nation at large. Thus, community developers should promptly understand how to work with people and more importantly how to affect the communities positively within the larger social institution context (Sung, 2014). Biddle and Biddle (1965) views community development as that process of social action which the citizen or the people of a particular community organize themselves for action and program needed for the common good of individuals and groups in the community with maximum reliance on community supplement resources. This includes changing the relationships among people and those in positions of authority in order that everyone would partake in the issues that concern or affect their lives. This will enable those with wealth of experience to channel it into collective action in order to achieve the desired goals of the community.

Community development in Nigeria has helped in reducing illiteracy and sickness. It has also to some extent helped in improving the standards of living of the people. Through the activities of community development cultural, economic and social conditions of communities has improved, thus enabling members of the community to contribute meaningfully to their community and the society in general. Community development to some extent helps to eradicate or reduce abject poverty in Nigeria. This is done through the provision of social amenities such as road, water, hospital and electricity. Community development helps to improve basic necessities of life of the people through the provision of items such as food, shelter, health service and education in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This paper used qualitative method of data analysis, specifically the thematic analysis. While data was sourced from existing and relevant journals, text books, documents and newspapers. Thus, the paper relied heavily on secondary sources of data collection.

EVOLUTION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Community development activities in Nigeria can be traced to 1946 during the colonialist administration with the formulation of the Ten

Year Plan for Development and Welfare for Nigeria as presented in No. 24 National Paper of 1945 with the aim of consolidation of the early amalgamation of 1914 as well as promoting development among the rural communities (Egbe, 2014). The community development action plan of the colonist administration did not improve the economic well-being of rural communities largely, because the problem associated with individual production remains and programs such the 1950s-1970s Marketing Boards and Regional Development Boards, the 1939 West Africa Oil Palm Institute (Nigeria), the 1951 West African Research Institute (Nigeria), the 1949 Nigeria Agricultural Project Mokwa lacked widespread outlook, while the Development Plans of 1955-1960 emphasizes the continuous increase in industrial and agricultural production with the aim of improving the standard of living of Nigerians (Egbe, 2014). After the country's independence in 1960 Western Nigeria Government began the community development program with the launched of Farm Settlement Scheme due the high rate of unemployment in the region, while the community development of Eastern Nigeria came to an end immediately the civil war began in Nigeria, in 1967 while the Northern region came up with Agricultural Institute to facilitate development of the community (Egbe, 2014). The post-independent community development plans were not quite different from the colonial period because the governmental policies exhibited by the political leaders and office holders failed to prioritize it, while for planning such a lofty project of community development was not taking seriously, and personal interest of these elites were considered over the program (Eny, 2010; Egbe, 2014)

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Poverty and Illiteracy: One of the major challenges of community development in Nigeria is poverty and illiteracy across the various segments of the country. Harande (2009) believes that the government and the leaders of the community should take the blame because the citizens deserve to enjoy the resources, wealth, and services rendered by the community and government of Nigeria. The communities on their own are expected to support and protect the infrastructures provided by the government for their own benefit. This is because according to Obasanjo and Mabogunje (1991:143):

For the rural populace to be able to exercise their sovereignty and assume responsibility for development, they must have necessary resources adequate revenue allocation from federal and state source and internal capacity to generate their own revenue locally as well as access to relevant and desirable information for development.

The degenerating condition of the various communities in the country despite the existence of policies and plans, such as Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI), People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Community Bank (CB), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and Poverty Eradication Programme (PEP) has not provided much needed assistance because illiteracy and poverty in the rural community in Nigeria remind alarming, which has unfortunately hindered the sincere community development in the country (Aminu & Onimisi, 2014; Harande, 2009). Illiteracy largely inhibits the community development and social progress of the citizens, because it hinders power to see and seek opportunities and good investment within their communities which invariably would have driven the development agenda of the government.

Lack of Information: The diverse nature of Nigeria indicates that the information needs are many and multi-dimensional. Hence, it is imperative to determine the measure of information needs in the country. In Nigeria, there is no comprehensive document on the information needs of the community. The information needs of the Nigerian community according to Harande (2009), include, neighborhood information about the problems of electricity supply, water availability, road maintenance, and environmental sanitation refuse disposal and flood. This is to enable them to prepare for the situation that may arise. Health information need. Information on how an individual can prevent various kinds of diseases that affect the people, thus creating an awareness of available healthcare delivery service and what it costs is another major challenge fronting community development in Nigeria (Harande, 2009). Information on policies of government is another aspect of challenge hindering effective community development in Nigeria. Information is needed by the people on their political rights and obligations and how they can exercise such obligations. This can rarely be found in the communities and rural areas of Nigeria. They also need to protect their

franchise and importantly, the need to know the action and inaction of the government, unfortunately, this is also lacking in Nigeria's community development quest. Information on employment is another major challenge of community development of Nigeria. The local communities across the country need information on employment opportunities by the government and corporate bodies, investment, on taxation banks, opportunities, and other financial activities, however, the reality on the ground shows that this vital information can rarely be found in Nigeria (Harande, 2009). Information on transportation is near absent in Nigeria. The local community in Nigeria needs basic information on the cost of transportation such as motorcycles, bicycles, and vehicles and importantly where they can obtain such information. They need information about road construction and maintenance, which invariably remains absence in the country. The challenges of information received by the communities are often distorted in the process of transmission in the country, this unhealthy situation remains an impediment, which has kept the local communities in Nigeria far away from development indicators (Harande, 2009).

Economic Challenges: The escalated unemployment in Nigeria in recent time has not only increase depression in the land, substance abuse, physical illness, and domestic violence, in the country but it has also contributed, in no small measure to the challenges of community development. Economic imbalance and inequality affect the citizen's stress levels, prospects of getting the quality education, access to social services in communities, exposure to violence and toxins, high rate of mortality and high-risk behavior. Nigerian governmental programs and policies for sustainable community development suffer huge setbacks because of the nature of the country economic development strategy which has contributed greatly to the slow pace in achieving unemployment reduction, community development, and structural transformation (Adah & Abasilim, 2015; Osakwe, 2010). This invariably shows that the strategies employed by Nigeria government for prompt development of the various communities has not achieved its capacities and structural transformation and development which are the pivot for sustainable development of the community (Adah & Abasilim, 2015; Osakwe, 2010).

Social Exclusion: Social connectedness, cohesion, and the inclusion of the community members have a direct relationship to social and physical development, which can invariably encourage civic participation in the overall community development project.

Unfortunately, exclusion remains one of the big challenges for community development in Nigeria. Community development is more meaningful when the people actively participate as agent and not just passive beneficiaries because the people themselves should monitor the developmental projects in the local communities. The failure of most development projects in Nigerian communities is attributable to exclusion of the local communities in the conception, design and of course implementation of such projects (Odo, 2012). Most community development policies and programs in Nigeria which exclude the main beneficiaries, especially in the rural communities could hardly make significant progress and thus of sustainability of such projects is often not guaranteed in the country. Unfortunately, those who suffer exclusions in their day-to-day in their community in Nigeria because of neglects tend to be depressed, often feel discontentment and aggression, thereby taken to crime and violence and begin to distrust the society thus guns and ammunition become operational tools which obviously hinders any developmental agenda of the government in these communities (Adah & Abasilim 2015).

Cultural Factors: Cultural beliefs remains of the challenges to community development in the country which have a bearing on efficiency, social inclusion, and income inequality in Nigeria. This cultural factors also include, some traditional beliefs, religion and gender especially in the case of Nigeria. The roles gender plays in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. The activities of various cultural beliefs may lead to the denial of opportunities for the people, especially women and children. These, unfortunately helped to widen the level of disparities in wealth creation, educational attainment, employment opportunities and life opportunities for their children as well. Also, religion can have a profound effect on both development issues and health, which, unfortunately, happens to be playing itself out in Nigeria. Cultural factor has affected the community development quest in Nigeria because its influence on the way the rural people understand and implement their economic/civic affairs as well as their relationships to other humans, and the principles of development, thus understanding of the cultural aspect of a society is crucial to development of those community since it is the primary means of survival and adaptation of man, the overall absence of this affects community development in Nigeria (Erhun, 2015).

Politics: It is important to note that most community issues have some element of political undertone, especially in Nigeria. The quest

to satisfy personal political interest over the collective community developmental agenda contributes to the setback for comprehensive and effective community development in Nigeria. The Nigerian political class like most political elite are often selfish, lacks the political will to formulate or initiate community development programs and policies and programs, this political elite tends to promote personal interests rather than the public interests, the activities, as well as excessive politicking at the community level, has rendered the quest for community development ineffective because of politics of division and segregation which often tend to be adopted at the expense of collective good of the community (Bappi, Singh, & Dahiru, 2017; Udo, 2014).

Insecurity: Insecurity is one of the greatest threats to community development (Onimisi, 2014). Insecurity can derail the developmental thrives of any community. Heightened insecurity in Nigeria remains great to the quest for community development in the country. The attempt by various communities in the country to employ self-help to mitigate some of the challenges they face in their daily activities has become an uphill task because of the heightened insecurity in the land. One of the greatest constitutional mandates of the government is to protect the lives and properties of the citizens, however, over the years this constitutional obligation of the government has remained unachieved in Nigeria. The inability of the government to meet its constitutional mandate of providing security to its citizens has greatly impacted negatively on community development in Nigeria. Invariably, insecurity hinders the quest for community development.

MITIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Learn about the Community: Constant contact, learning and familiarity tour to these communities helps to build trust among the government, institutions and non-governmental organizations and the community, which is needed before meaningful developmental projects can commence in the communities.

Listening to Community Members: Close observation of the community is required through learning and listening to the community members, as this will provide meaningful insight about the weaknesses, strengths and the immediate needs of the community

via direct contact. Regular contact with these community leaders or representatives who are familiar with the community needs and aspirations is the first concrete step for mitigating the challenges of community development.

Access to Information and Issues: Getting access to information is made possible and easy when trust and friendship has been built between the community leaders or representatives and the various institution. Building relationship and trust helps in the gathering of information about the community, which will in turn assist governmental agencies and institutions in providing accurate and concrete information which is vital for effective community development plan. Community development is a basic necessity for development and providing useful information is an important ingredient in the development project of any nation, thus citizens in rural areas in Nigeria whether literate or not should have access to basic information which will help them to become more informed about issues around their environment, and productive in issues in their social and political obligations (Okiy 2003). Thus, information is a basic resource needed for community development in Nigeria. Information needed for community development should be based on information dissemination and training workers/rural members, which can potentially be realized when technologies and knowledge are shared effectively among the rural people involved (Adedokun et al., 2010).

Develop and Implement Action Plan: Implementation of community development programs and projects requires the creation of short-term, mid-term and long-term implementation strategy with the aid of both material and human resources. The mobilization of both material and human resources, and the inclusion of community members and volunteers need to be supported by genuine political will in order to achieve comprehensive development programs. Implementation is key to all community development programs, hence the Nigeria government should take this seriously. Thus, there is a need for the government to develop implementation guidelines for all community development programs, which should be followed up with implementation action plan.

Evaluate Results of Actions: It is important to note that evaluation is necessary for the quest for community development as this will

enable a better action plan and proper repositioning for prompt and better community development in Nigeria. Evaluation of action plan will help to demonstrate the performance of the various initiatives and how promptly has it solved or met the needs of the community. In the quest to mitigate the challenges faced in the community development action plan of the Nigeria community, the need for constant evaluation of the programs put in place for such purpose in order to ensure that the targeted goals are achieved and guaranteed by the government.

Sustainability should be guaranteed by the government:

Community development can be sustained in different ways through a variety of methods, but one remains obvious the plan and vision of each community development must be clearly articulated. There is no all-encompassing definition of the concept of sustainable community development, this is because each and every community has its features and challenges, which they consider as part of their development strives. However, sustainable community's principles have shared concerns and themes, which include social justice, security, environmental protection, economic issues and welfare of the citizenry. Sustainable community development attempts to integrate social and environmental objects as well as economic objectives in the development of the community. While Uche et al. (2014) sees sustainable community development as the compelling alternative considered based on the relationships between the social and economic factors such as education housing, natural environment, arts and access to health, thus increasing the participation and inclusion the citizens for concrete and positive changes in communities. Similarly, Raheem and Bako (2014) sees community development as that efforts of the government targeted at solving social, political or economic problems through some programs aimed at achieving specific goals such as eradicating poverty, promotion of skills, raising standard of living of the people and literacy level as well as creation of employment at a particular period. Implementing sustainable development in the community will require the resolve of the member of the community that they have the capacity to solve most of their problem through deliberate agreement among the stakeholders on the need to implement strategy sustainable program in ground, continuous community assessment, creating set goal and vision, identify other sources of assistance, monitor and evaluate project that of benefit to the community.

CONCLUSION

Community development is very crucial to national development. This is why it is necessary to encourage community initiatives for self-determination and development because the federal and the state government cannot adequately provide enough of what the community needs. It is obvious from the above-analysis that information can positively impact the community, which unfortunately is seriously lacking in Nigeria. Thus, the paper opined that building a strong bond between the community leaders and the institution of government can adequately assist in the overall goal of prosperous and steady development of the communities in Nigeria. The paper further recommends that prospective development plan of the Nigerian government should be tied to the specific needs of each of the communities in the country, as this will enable them to participate fully in the development programs of the government. Enlightenment and education of the community must be prioritized, while modern technology should be promoted in the skills and craft business of the local community in Nigeria.

It is imperative to note that since poverty and illiteracy constitute serious impediments to community development in Nigeria, the government needs to strengthen its poverty eradication policies for immediate and comprehensive implementation, as this would help to enhance community development strive of Nigeria. Another important measure that can ensure community development strive in Nigeria is putting in place adequate security. Adequate Security can ensure comprehensive community development strive in Nigeria. The government needs to do more to ensure her citizens and the community they inhabit are adequately secured because this remains the fundamental to the attainment of the goals of community development.

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