

Factors Affecting Community Participation in Community Development Programmes in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Community participation can mean collective activity entered into by the members of a group in order to effect changes or make improvement about an issue or outcome in a community. This paper discuss the concept of community development and the approaches to community development. The paper also discuss the government attitude towards community development programmes in Niger State and participation community development process, the advantages of community participation programmes in community development. This paper also discussed the rural and urban participation in community development programmes with the involvement of community leaders attitude towards community development programmes in Niger State.

Introduction

Community development has to be viewed as involving the improvement of the systems of values in a community, its structure, as well as the usages through which it functions and is maintained. This still brings out the fact that the central idea of community development is that it implies change. That is, it involves social change. Its primary purpose is to bring about change for better living within the community. As has been observed, because this can be deliberately induced, or willingly modified by the people themselves, community development remains an object or tool for purposive change. It is the tool for involving people, in their communities, to help their own economic and social conditions, and thereby to become effective working groups in programmes of their national development (Anyanwu, 2009).

Approaches to community development usually involve the point of view of three main groups in the process. According to Anyanwu (1999), these are the participants, the government agencies and the professionals. The participants are members of the local population, who need community development as a matter of urgency for the improvement of their community. They are the principal actors on the stage for community betterment. The government agencies are essential bodies outside the local community. They include various levels of government, voluntary

association and philanthropist bodies. For convenience they are all grouped as government agencies. They are the professionals or the change agents who are the on-the spot direction and guidance for the achievement of the goal of community development programmes.

Government has significant role in community development that informs policy formulation. According to Akumah (2008), government policy for community is to encourage people at grass roots levels to develop democratic values and process in the village. He continue by saying that, the aim is to ensure that the provision of technical and other services should not only encourage initiation, self-help and mutual assistance but should also make them more effective. The important role of government in community development programme should serve two principal purposes. First, it aims at eradicating poverty and stagnation in the villages which have adopted this activity as a means of inducing better living among their citizen. Secondly, it should serve to create in the masses a sense of responsibility and involvement in the development of both their community and the wider society. The factors influencing participation in community development programme could be based on how an individual is motivated or encouraged to take part in community development activities toward the development of his community. In this regard, the community members need a facilitator, a trained professional, a change agent, who can strongly influence their behaviors to participate in community development programme. Here the change agent or the community development officer assist the people to form like-minded self-help groups for development which in most cases emphasis is placed on socio, economic, and cultural development.

Community

The term community is not static. This explains the difficulty involved in pinning down a universally acceptable definition of a community. There have been different approaches to the definition of the concept. A community could be viewed in terms of all the people or group of people living within a specific geographical area such as village, a town, a city, a neighborhood or even a whole State Universal Basic Education Board (2004), conceived community in two senses, firstly, as a sound unit and secondly as geographical or ecological unit. This implies that, such group of people is closely knit and organized. Apparently, togetherness among the people spells out a common felling of community (i.e. oneness). Again, community can be perceived as a people or group of people who share common interest or functions such as farming group or agricultural group, education, culture or religion. This group may not include everyone within the geographical area or boundary, but only those individuals who have a particular interest or function in common. A common objective bring such people together to develop some awareness and feeling for the need to work together at solving their common problems. This is the type of community that Christenson, (2005) referred to as functional community.

The mere traditional community is one where relationship is personal, intimate and often enduring. Such relationships are often ends in themselves. They are not formed to serve narrow interest and purposes. The community which they occur is

not only homogenous but also fixed. The people work as a team with relatively few divisions or clashes of interest. Every member in such community knows and accepts his place, and the moral code of the community is well defined and generally upheld. Characteristics feature of a community

- Share the same territory
- The same beliefs
- Share bounds of fellowship
- Have a common behavior
- Common culture, norms, customs and traditions

Development

The concept of development is a problematic one. There are as many views on the concept as there are scholars. It is a concept that is value loaded. It is generally seen as almost a synonym for improvement. Development has been used in many senses including political, economic and social. UNDP (2004) stated that development is a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system to enhance living condition of the people. According to Oduaran (1994), development implies some form of change usually from a prior bad or poor condition to a better one.

Development implies change in different capacity, Nyerere (1978), maintained that development is summed up as man's capacity to expand his own consciousness, and therefore, his power over himself, his environment and his society. To him, man is the central peg around which development revolves. Hence he concluded that development is for man by man and of man. This means that man is not only the recipient or beneficiary of development effort but must also initiate the effort to develop himself. In other word; the opportunities created by development are generated or induced through human efforts. Man must show the desire to develop before development can come. Beside, true development is that which leads to expansion and growth of man's inner qualities. Put in another way, development must raise mans' ability to dominate himself, become less dependent and more proficient in what he is doing as well as become critical in outlook.

Community Development

Community development has to be viewed as involving the improvement of the systems of values in a community, its structure, as well as the usages through which it functions and is maintained. This still brings out the fact that the central idea of community development is that it implies change. That is, it involves social change. Its primary purpose is to bring about change for better living within the community. As has been observed, because this can be deliberately induced, or willingly modified by the people themselves, community development remains an object or tool for purposive change. It is the tool for involving people, in their communities, to help their own economic and social conditions, and thereby to become effective working groups in programmes of their national development (Anyanwu, 2009).

Therefore, community development could be seen as development process embracing the effort of individuals, self-help groups, non-governmental and governmental organizations, collective thinking, collective action and participation of each unit or body, identifying with different roles towards increasing the social and economic well-being of the people toward nation's growth. (Ismail, 2011) In addition, Obodoechi (2006), summarized the objectives of community development as follows:-

- I. Improvement of life at the community level as much as our human and material resources can carry us.
- II. To develop all aspects of community living equitably so as to avoid in balance or neglect of any area of living.
- III. To achieve a self-generating breakthrough of producing the human and physical process of change.
- IV. To minimize poverty and unemployment in the community as well as provide governmental services, explore and use technical assistance available outside the community.
- V. It aims at agricultural extension and development, rural industrial development, rural sanitation, diseases control and health programmes, rural education planning, planning for rural finance, cooperation, development of communication and other recreational facilities.

Approaches to Community Development

Approaches to community development usually involve the point of view of three main groups in the process. According to Anyanwu (1999), these are the participants, the government agencies and the professionals. The participants are members of the local population, who need community development as a matter of urgency for the improvement of their community. They are the principal actors on the stage for community betterment. The government agencies are essential bodies outside the local community. They include various levels of government, voluntary association and philanthropist bodies. For convenience they are all grouped as government agencies. They are the professionals or the change agents who are the on-the spot direction and guidance for the achievement of the goal of community development programmes. Omoruyi (2001) identified six major approaches to community development as follows:-

Matching Grant Approach

The matching grant approach manifest itself in form of partnership between government and the people in community development. This approach takes the form of self-help project initiated by various communities, under the supervision of their local authority or leadership structure with the government providing technical, financial and managerial assistance. In this approach the contribution of the people include money, materials and labour which are needed for implementing a part of the programme or project. In using this approach, the people are expected to identify their needs, arrange them in order of priority and work out strategies for meeting them. Thereafter, they take action, when the action is on the government

chips in its support in form of “matching grants” which are expected to sustain the interest of people in continuing with the programme implementation until it is successfully completed (Okedara, 2011).

Directive Approach

This involves a situation where in the government or another outside development agency evolves a programme for the people. Under this approach, the government or other agencies act as though it is the ultimate judge of what is good for the people. In other words, it decides on what it feels the people want and go ahead to fashion out a project to achieve it. In this circumstances, the agency or government supplies the staff, equipment, materials, and programme it considers necessary to meet the need and interest of the people with the hope that the people will avail themselves of the services or activities it provides. This approach is particularly useful where there is mass illiteracy, lack of resources or where community members have been apathetic, lethargic or indifferent to progress or change and also incapable of projecting themselves into the mainstream of national development (Minzey, 2008).

Non Directive Approach

This emphasizes the people’s involvement. In this approach, the people are allowed to identify their needs or problems, prioritize the needs, decide on what to do to solve the problems and take action on the basis of the plan drawn. This approach thrives under the condition that:

1. The people are dissatisfied with their condition or with the way things are and agree on what their problems are;
2. They must realize that the problems will remain unresolved or unsolved unless they are prepared to do something about it themselves.
3. They have sufficient resources to deal with the problems; (i.e. they must have sufficient resources such as manpower, equipment, incentives and necessary management capabilities to meet their problems of felt-needs).

In this approach, the role of the outside agency or government will be that of acting as a catalyst that stimulates and motivate the people to be actively involved in the improvement of their way of life. The approach gives the people opportunity to acquire skills or knowledge needed to induce or bring about desirable changes for ensuring community improvement (Sanders, 2005).

Sectorial Approach

This manifested itself in divided approaches to community development. In this approach, different agencies, professional or governmental ministries or agency may undertake different or various development programmes in the areas of health, agriculture, housing, education, recreation or cooperative within a given community. The programme is usually undertaken differently without any coordinating machinery (Maclver, 2012).

Integrated Approach

This is based on the recognition of the fact that community development is more than improvement in material or tangible things like road, building, or the construction of dam and bridges through self-help. The theme of this approach is that a comprehensive programme for community development must include provision for socio-economic, cultural and political development of the people. This helps to promote total communal development. This approach calls for the effective coordination of all human and material resources available in any community for the achievement of its maximum integration of all aspects of development of the people (Nelson, 2009).

Government Attitude toward Community Development

Government has significant role in community development that informs policy formulation. According to Akumah (2008), government policy for community is to encourage people at grass roots levels to develop democratic values and process in the village. He continue by saying that, the aim is to ensure that the provision of technical and other services should not only encourage initiation, self-help and mutual assistance but should also make them more effective. The important role of government in community development programme should serve two principal purposes. First, it aims at eradicating poverty and stagnation in the villages which have adopted this activity as a means of inducing better living among their citizen. Secondly, it should serve to create in the masses a sense of responsibility and involvement in the development of both their community and the wider society.

The social development policy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2005) stipulated that government is expected to establish a legal and structural frame work for the execution of community development programmes as well as provide budget allocation to fully integrate citizens into national development responsibilities which have to be distributed among the three tier of government. In support of the above statement, Eze (2004) stated that the responsibility of the government coordination and monitoring of community development activities, provision of annual budgetary allocation, funding of research and planning. Other activities according him include education and training of facilitators and community leaders through exchange programme, as well as promoting functional literacy courses, leadership training, and facilitation of cooperative activities espousing integrated community development approach. Owamalam (2010) noted that implicit in the general understanding of the operation of community development is the idea that the resources of the community can be supplemented with services and materials from the governmental and other agencies outside the community. Such assistance is aimed at lending impetus to the effort of the community to improve its conditions, and to a level it may not be able to attain, using the resources immediately available to it. In another development Fasokun (2008) stressed that government agencies in the field are always out to assist community efforts. Government assistance may be in the form of award of prizes to the best communities, which have been found to have effectively mobilized their resources for development. Also agencies are also partners in the funding of community

development programmes. Some agencies are known to have donated physical cash and equipment or may choose to single-handedly initiate and complete project that have been collectively or jointly agreed upon or identified by the people.

Community Participation

Participation can mean collective activity entered into by members of a group in order to effect change or make improvement about an issue or outcome. Singer (2011) defined participation as ‘the sum of actions taken by ordinary members of a political system in order to influence or attempt to influence outcome’. Participation varies in degree and intensity. This is considered to be increasingly extensive when more people engage in it. It is also intensive to the individual in terms of effort, money or time. Reid (2000) further said that participation by ordinary citizens is determined by the balance made between benefits and costs. In this respect, benefits means a lot which can include collective goals, personal incentives and personal cost that are notably the dominant factor.

Community participation occurs when a community organizes itself to take responsibility for managing its problems. Taking responsibility include identifying problems, developing actions, putting them into place and following through (Cheethan, 2001). Community participation is sometimes defined in practical terms as represented by youth in Burkina Faso in a collective action. The youth of Burkina Faso worked with organizations in their community to improve the adolescent reproductive and sexual health. The activities involved can be seen in the table one presented below:-

Community Participation Process: An Overview

Mode of Participation	Types of participation
Co-opted	On manipulation; representatives are chosen but have no real power or output
Cooperating	Tasks are assigned with incentives. Outsiders decided agenda and direct the process
Consulted	Local opinions are sought. Outsiders analyze data and decide on course of action.
Collaborating	Local people work together with outsiders to determine priorities. Responsibilities remain with outsiders for directing the process.
Co-learning	Local people and outsiders share their knowledge to create new understanding and work together to form action plans.
Collective	Local people set the agenda and mobilize to carry it out utilizing outsiders, but as required by local people.

Adopted from Cheethan (2001)

There is high consensus among development expert that development can easily be accelerated if energies and resources of the benefiting communities are mobilized and the poor have human right to take part in making decision that affects their lives and livelihood. In view of the importance of participation in development, the United Nations Economic and Social Council recommended that ‘government should adopt popular participation as a basic policy measure in national strategy’. And action participation should be encouraged by every individual and non-governmental bodies such as clubs, trade unions, youth and women organizations in the development process.

Mass participation is of immense benefits. Pan (2011) emphasized that ‘participation in implementing projects reduces their cost by mobilizing un-used local resources and free human energy’. This of course, is of immense importance in the developing countries where capital is the major constraint. Uemura (2011) further stated that “Participation in decision making provides planners with much better information on people’s wants and dislikes. It helps to avoid the kind of disaster errors, failure and white elephant project with which the history of development is littered usually because the supposed beneficiaries were not adequately consulted.”

Community Participation in Community Development Programme

Community development cannot take place if there is no participation by the community. Similarly, Crofton (2001) opined that participation is thus both means and an *end* which involves the process where local people provides input and cooperate or collaborate with planners and developers within the community to ensure acceptable and successful outcomes and/or whereby initiatives can be implemented more effectively. Participation can also be seen as a goal in itself. Ahmad (2011) posited that participation is a vehicle to achieve development that community members can involve directly in the development process. The role of participation in community development is very important.

The objectives of any community voluntary effort in community development programme are empowerment. Akintayo and Oghenekohwo (2004), defined community participation at its onset as a process in decision-making, a precondition if the objective is empowerment. Where participation is a means to achieve development projects, it is usually included only at the implementation and maintenance level.

In their book, *People Participation, Local Government and Rural Development*, Akintayo and Oghenekohwo (2004), defined participation as collective efforts to increase and exercise control over resources and institution on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from control. However, this definition has implication on the economic, social, political, and cultural divides. Accordingly, the authors further observes that: ‘It (participation) can contribute to the basic needs strategy by playing a part in the definition of basic needs, by enhancing the generation of resources to meet basic needs, by

improving the distribution of goods and services, and by satisfying the psychological desire to participate in decision-making which affects the lives of people. Literature is replete with various paradigms on participation, but one vital issue of contention is whether the various groups or organizations using the concept constitute a meaningful expression of participatory institutions of empowerment. One should not forget that participation as a strategy is empowerment-oriented in people's life and community action (Akintayo & Oghenekohwo, 2004).

Community participation has the advantage of increasing project efficiency, promoting project effectiveness, helping to build the capacity of beneficiary as well as enhancing and empowering the members of the community. It can also promote confidence building and create a sense of belonging in the people. Community participation according to Cheethan (2001) stipulates that the local people should be involved in the planning, execution, utilization and assessment of the activities designed to enhance their well-being. However, citizen participation implies much more than involvement. Akumah, (2008) is of the view that it involves democracy and education. It is also based on the tested tradition of free 'enterprises' and 'right' of the community members. In the course of trying to effect a change in the well-being of community members, we should always remember that the individual has his inherent and legal right to humane treatment. We must therefore, appeal to his conscience and free will. The ability to solicit his support and participation are the primary ingredients of the free enterprises and democratic participation being stressed here.

Quality of Community Development Officer in Community Development Participation

The factors influencing participation in community development programme could be based on how an individual is motivated or encouraged to take part in community development activities toward the development of his community. In this regard, the community members need a facilitator, a trained professional, a change agent, who can strongly influence their behaviors to participate in community development programme. Here the change agent or the community development officer assist the people to form like-minded self-help groups for development which in most cases emphasis is placed on socio, economic, and cultural development. Akintayo and Oghenekohwo (2004) observed that, official and voluntary assistance also stimulates the desire of the community members to make an advance. It fosters that ability of community members to combine for self-help, and equips them for the readiness to make use of improved methods and instrument for the improvement of their welfare.

Community development officer, according to Adekanmbi (2011), is a multipurpose worker or a catalyst of the change process. Their training and wide spectrum of their area of interest make them worker of different parts. In the promotion of change and facilitation of meaningful and sustainable development, Anyawu (2001), described their role in this way; 'they play a dual role as agent of cultural change, and (i) a social technician (ii) a cultural motivator. Hence they are

concerned with the change attitude, skill and knowledge, which take place among the people and develop the desire to improve their life.

In a similar study conducted on the impact of a change agent's effort, has been demonstrated in a study carried by Crombie (2000) on illiterate farmers in a grain industry in Australia. Initially, the illiterate farmer's battle with poor soil, insect attack, lack of improved farming practice, chemical fertilizer and pest control due to illiteracy. Also annual productivity growth was put at 3% annually for twenty years. However, when the farmers were introduced to the "learning brokers" through a change agents who exposed the farmers to general agricultural literacy and training the yield and productivity of the grain industry increased.

To succeed in any community development activities the quality of community development officer will strongly influence community participation in community development. Shields (2000) identified some qualities of community development officers as follows:-

- Be acquainted with the natural problems and the cultural background. Must be honest, sincere, and hardworking and have high general intelligence.
- Should have self-confidence and should be correct in his judgment. Be sympathetic and partner in joy and sorrow with the people. Be prompt, able to influence the people in a positive way, should have burning enthusiasm to speed up their activities.
- Encourage growth of leadership ability and promote experience of the community. By reference to these qualities of community development officer it is clear that, person with strained reputation (dishonesty, questionable character, or dealing etc.) may have equal difficulty in organizing a community-wide development programme. Credibility is necessary for successful community participation.

Community Leader's Attitude toward Community Development Programmes

Community development participation relies heavily on local leadership to elicit the enthusiasm of the people. The operation efficacy of such reliance is to ensure that it is not only the development agents who are paid officials, but also the local leaders, who act as agent of change in their community. Okoye (2009) stressed that, those local leaders are often, volunteers, and they are perhaps the very real agents of social development in their communities.

In community development, the role of a leader is to foster the participation or genuine involvement of the people in activities designed to improve their lives and well-being. In order to achieve this, Akintayo and Oghenekohwo (2004) stressed that they should endeavor to help the people to identify the problem inhibiting their progress, and lead them to prepare to do something to solve these problems. The community leaders must endeavor to lead his people to the appreciation that success can be achieved where they willingly cooperate to achieve their set goal.

He has to be assured that the citizens themselves are involved in the planning, execution, utilization and assessment of any project designed to improve their welfare. Omoruyi (2001) stated that, local leaders are required for the planning, preparation, submission of the proposal for funding and initiation of projects as well as the sustenance and utilization of such projects.

Leadership according to Omoruyi (2001) is simply the activity of influencing people to cooperate towards the achievement of some desirable goal or targets. It also refers to that process whereby an individual directs, guides, influence or controls the thought, feeling or behavior of other human beings in order to achieve certain goals or end. A leader therefore, is that person who controls the behavior of others or is able to elicit the compliance of individual in a broad range of activities geared towards the attainment of a particular or given goal. For a leader to be able to foster genuine involvement or participation of people in an activity, he must be exemplary in nature, trustworthy, articulate, and full of initiative, drive and energy.

In addition, community leader help their people to identify the problems hindering their progress as a community, lead them to prepare and take action that would lead to the resolution of these problems. Besides, they lead their people to appreciate the fact that success can only be achieved where they can willingly work together to advice their set goals. Hence, they must make sure that the generality of their people are involved in the planning, execution, utilization, and assessment of any project designed to improve their standard of living and general well-being (Omoruyi, 2001).

Conclusion

Effective participation in community development programme demands an organization of effective communication, which will remove the fear of the participant towards the community development programmes in the society. Ensuring effective participation in community development programmes requires active mobilization of people as such approach gives room for the members to be aware of all development activities that take place in their community.

Lastly it is very important to note that a successful community development programme can be achieved through the effective participation of members in the decision making, evaluation and implementation of their community development activities. Participation of the members of the community in their community development programmes is necessarily whether in rural or urban areas.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study the following recommendations were made.

1. Niger State Government in collaboration with ministry of youth and community development should embark on realistic and holistic community development Programmes.
2. The community leaders, head of associations, traditional rulers, and community based organization should also involve in enlistment campaign about the importance of participation in community development programme.
3. Non-governmental organization such as religious bodies should embark on

enlisting people on the important of community participation in community development Programmes.

4. The community development agent and practitioners should also effectively involved community members in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of community development programmes.

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