

Impact of Local Participation in Projects Implementation on the Socio-Economic Wellbeing in Obubra Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The involvement of rural people in the effective implementation of local projects cannot be overstressed. The more rural people were involved to address their own development, the more confidence and success level associated with such programmes. This study aims at assessing the impact of local participation in projects implementation on the socio-economic well-being in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria, with focus on the Sustainable Health for Environment Development project in the area. The study adopts a survey design and data was obtained from primary and secondary sources. Extant literature obtained to explain the variables of the study was supported by the power and participatory approach of Giddens (2006). The population consisted of 700 inhabitants of Ofumbongha community. From this number 400 respondents were purposively selected to form the sample size of the study. The instrument used for this study was a structured questionnaire. Linear Regression was the statistical technique employed in the study. The result from the data analysis, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative which states that participation in local project implementation through consultation significantly relate with the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in terms of improved literacy in Ofumbongha in Obubra L.G.A of Cross River State was accepted. The study recommends the need to increase the level of awareness to ensure local participation in project implementation in Nigeria.

Keywords:

Local participation,
Projects
implementation,
Socio-Economic
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Background to the Study

Emerging development studies have shown that local participation in community and/or project implementation is significant to rural development (Reid, 2002; Blackman, 2003). In the middle of this development discourse is community participation, (Blackman, 2003). It can be said that participation has been in existence for long like democracy itself. Community people are the most neglected and deprived people because they are the least people with such essential services as housing, education, health among others. Reid (2002) viewed participation in terms of organized efforts and power-sharing in order to increase control over resources and regulate institutions.

In this sense, participation is an active process which enables participants to take Initiatives and actions that are stimulated by their own thinking and deliberate over which they exert effective control. Raniga and Simpson (2002) remarked that "participation might mean that communities are allowed direct and ultimate control in taking a decision concerning their affairs". The involvements of people in electing people of their choice into political power, attending public meetings and contributing money to community development projects form parts of community participation.

Aref and Redzuan (2009) viewed "participation as the democratic and voluntary process where individuals are involved in the contribution to developmental programmes; sharing fairly in the benefits that are accruable, also contributing to decision making in respect to goal setting, policy formulation and in the planning and implementation of social and economic developmental programmes". However, in Nigeria, rural project implementation has been obstructed by centered down approaches in which the community people are involved in the planning, conception and in the monitoring of projects that often leads to abandonment and failure of valuable projects. Having realized the weakness of this approach, it has paved way for the adoption of the bottom-up approach to development. Since the 1970s, there have been deliberate government and non-governmental efforts towards mobilizing the people for rural development. The efforts of Sustainable Health for Environment Development (SHED) constitute integral parts of concerted efforts geared towards socio-economic transformation at the grassroots.

The major issue confronting rural development programme in Nigeria and specifically Ofunibongha in Obubra local government area of Cross River State was the absence of sustainable development that is driven by the participation of programme. This agrees with why Cheethan (2002) opined that a very strong relationship between participation and sustainability exists. The more rural people were involved to address their own development, the more confidence and success level associated with such programmes. The premise of this study is therefore to examine the impact of the impact of local participation in projects implementation on the socio-economic well-being in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study anchors on SHED project in the area.

Literature and theoretical framework

Participation in local projects implemented through consultation will bring about community development. In 1953 the United Nations (UN) defined community development as "a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole Community with active participation and the fullest possible reliance upon community initiative". It involves the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of government authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities and to integrate them into the life of the nation in order to enable them to contribute fully to national progress".

Community development involves a wide variety of activities such as: literacy and adult education programme, provision of basic needs such as water through sinking boreholes, health care through the construction and staffing of maternity and health centres, construction of churches and schools, provision of recreation parks, opening of feeder roads, and awarding of scholarship. Community development is a process where individuals in the community come together to take action collectively and proffer solutions to common problems affecting them; this collective action is being taken at the grass root level.

This, in essence, is community health. Community health is the effort by the members of a community to improve their state of well-being. A community effort is when people in the community try to work together on a project that will benefit them in the community. Examples of community efforts for health promotion are the provision of potable water, health centers, good roads, education etc. Ebong (2006) noted that "in 1945, rural development as a mass education was redefined to mean the movement which is designed to promote better living for the community as a whole. From that time, the need to consciously accelerate the pace of rural development has increasingly become quite compelling". In the same direction, there is an urgent need to develop rural Infrastructure as inevitable aspects of community development through the provision of basic social amenities. Infrastructural facilities refer to those basic services without which primary, secondary, and tertiary productive activities cannot function. In its wider sense, infrastructural facilities embrace all public education, public health, transportation, communication and water supply (Thwala, 2010). In other words, infrastructural facilities are elements in the package of basic needs, which a community would like to procure for better living (Raniga and Simpson, 2002).

Gebreindhin (2002) viewed rural infrastructure as a system of physical human and institutional forms of capital which enables rural residents to better perform their production processing and distribution activities as well as help to improve overall quality of life such as storage facilities, market, research extension services including schools and colleges that engage in training a variety of skilled agricultural workers. Rural infrastructure plays a crucial role in economic growth, poverty reduction, and empowerment for the poor in rural areas of Africa (Adepoju and Salman 2013). The people of Ofumbongha in Obubra LGA are one of the rural poor.

SHED, in its project, sensitized the children, women as well as the men towards participating in community services and infrastructural development. According to Porter (2013), a project is defined as "a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result"; temporal hi that, it has a beginning and end. Secondly, it is repetitive in that repetitive elements may be present but has functional uniqueness. Thirdly, is progressively elaborated. Distinguishing characteristics of each unique project will be progressively detailed as the project is better understood. The health of a community is always a priority for governments, non-governmental organizations and public health care (PHC) is a veritable tool for achieving essential care for all. Community participation remains crucial to the success of PHC interventions. This study has demonstrated that the communities acknowledge these facts and yearn for greater involvement in the overall planning of health interventions.

Community members were involved in various health and development activities hi the community to ensure the wellbeing of the citizenry. The activities are undertaken at any point in time depending on the existing needs at a particular point in time. Community members were engaged in self-help and it was customary to find such gestures with proper mobilization. SHED mobilized community members for self-help. The service method to local development also known as self -help in Nigeria Self-help programmes are associated with the rural dwellers themselves. One of the characteristics of self-help is that it is both an object of what and a process of how. It is a scheme must be induced change process for the achievement of local development. The process must be a well-articulated effort and plan to assist people in acquiring skills, attitudes, and concepts that are needed for local and community participation in finding solutions for a broad range of local problems.

Mayan (2016) asserted that the educational project organization in Guatemalan has significantly improved the lives of rural dwellers. Mayan emphasized that their contribution towards educational upliftment has been in the area's construction of community schools, supplying facilities, equipping of science laboratory and renovation. The organization is able to do this through both internal and external funding services. In the same vein, through the assistance provided by SHED, on their own part community members organize the repair of roads and bridge building in areas where the government can provide these services.

The local people have erected schools, build health care centers, and have engaged in different developmental programs without the support of the government. It is a normal thing to find local projects that the government made it compulsory for community members to raise funds for partnership fees to promote ownership. Community members were involved in the erection of classroom building and made available lands secondary school project (Ekpo, 2011). This agrees with the power and participatory approach that participatory approach put individuals in rural areas at the topmost center of developmental programmes.

Women participation in the study area cannot be overemphasized. Afinja and Aina (2009) revealed that women are said to be a vital part of the national development and third parties for sustainable growth in all level. Similar to other democratic nations in the world, the different administration has carried out sustained campaigning for effective and greater

political participation in line with the declaration of the Beijing conference that called for political participation of 35 percent appointments of local indigenes. According to Ukpom (2009), in order for the Federal Government to realize the 35 percent affirmative action, the National Gender Policy was set to promote the attainment of this target. Ubeku (2008) informed that the National Commission for Women was established by Maryam Babangida and later upgraded to the Ministry of Women Affairs at the national level. State governments throughout the country equally established their commission. These institutions are a permanent structure of government today.

The role of women has increased positively in politics as indicated by the emphasis on the mobilization of rural women by First Ladies at the state level. Through the political activities of state first ladies, women organizations even in rural areas are beginning to find a rallying point to embark on common action socially, politically and economically. Ukpom (2009) commented that with Women for Change Initiative, the empowerment project of the present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigerian women have been awakened and empowered through various programmes, summits and enlightenment campaigns to ensure that women are constitutionally recognized as stakeholders.

Theoretical framework

The power and participatory approach

The theory is advocated by Giddens (2006). According to the power theory, poverty has a link with the political power structure in a given society and these accounts for the extent and distribution of poverty and resources. This is more so where the ruling elite or class established and legitimates an exploitative system of property which determines the allocation of income, opportunities, resources, and wealth, relying on the use of state power to its advantage (Marx in Giddens, 2006). World Bank (1996) clearly stated that rural development and which the neo-Marxist belief is capable of dismantling development ends. For development to take place in the rural space there is a need for mass participation of the people themselves, to draw the poor into the design of development policy programme in every stage of development, from the period of conception to implementation.

UNPD (1993) and World Bank (1996), advocate for mass participation of the citizens in every development initiative and further observed that failure to allow or attempt to deny and deprive them, the programme and initiative would likely fail. The people must own the initiative and be involved in all the procedures while government or agencies only assist them to realize and achieve their development objective. This is in line with the activities of SHED in the study area. Community members now participate and get involved in their local projects. All existing poverty alleviation reforms in cross river state and Nigeria in general, with a bottom-top approach for its delivery, remain a mirage because of these power relations. Thus Karl Marx views poverty as a continuous struggle between two opposing forces, the haves and the have not and this yield a class structure in society that prevent an equitable distribution of resources.

Participation refers to the process by which members or stakeholders are part of development programmes, and processes and decisions that concern them (World Bank, 1995). Except the less privileged of society are given the chance to be a part of developmental interventions aimed at improving their livelihood, the chances are that they will continuously miss the intervention's benefits. The essence of stakeholders' being part of the intervention process is established in donors society. Being part of the development initiatives by stakeholders involve guaranteeing the participation of people that are to be the beneficiaries of developmental plans. The crux of stakeholder's participation is that the supposed beneficiaries drive the process. Meaning they drive the process, design, monitoring, implementation, and evaluation of the initiative.

The major principle of this approach is that stakeholders and community are partners in a project in every part and stage of the development of the project. Hence, participative approaches are aimed at generating a complete sense of ownership of actions and decisions. This contrasts the alternate model of development, in which schemes initiation, design, and objectives are forced on the indigenous community by external agents that characterize the scheme. Participatory approaches also challenge people's perception, which leads to attitudinal change and agenda, and provides also surprising insight. The key means of meeting human basic needs is individuals and communities being part of problem-solving in their community. Achieving community development, provision of food, healthcare and tapping into new resources is possible not through natural efforts but by people involved doing something to help themselves (Ebong, 2006).

Participatory approaches started in the 1950s, which is the later period of the British Colonial Administration in Nigeria. Since the country's political independence (1960) a new demand has been made on the need for citizen participation to meet the innovative and growing complexities of government activities in political, social and economic spheres. The participatory theory is based on principles of conscientization, local control, cooperation, and self-reliance. It involves putting the last first or the former. It is a professional revolution that espouses people's participation and seeks to learn and use indigenous knowledge. It is a creative response to a new need; reacts creatively and favorable needs, expectations, and oriented people responsibilities of growth and also development accountability. The approach fixes people at the center of rural community development programme.

Methodology

Research design

The study adopted a survey research design. Ofumbongha in Obubra local government area was the area studied in this research. The ten villages in the area were studied to examine and analyze Sustainable Health for Environment Development (SHED) socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers. The reasons for choosing this community for the study were: the proximity to the researcher, it is well known to the researcher who understands the culture of the people among other things.

Population and sample of the study

The population of this study consists of the inhabitants of the ten villages in Ofumbongha community. The spread of the population across the ten villages revealed that Ofumbongha has the largest population of 700 people (NPC, 2006). The sample size for this study is four hundred (400) participants who were purposively selected from four villages in Ofumbongha community. The sample consists of self-employed, gainfully employed, students, farmers, fishermen, entrepreneurs, and NGO staff living in the study area. The distribution of sample size shows that one hundred (100) respondents were selected from each of the four villages randomly selected for the study. Taro Yamane's sample size determinant was applied in confirming the minimum required sample size.

Sampling technique and analysis

Stratified and random sampling techniques were used in the study. The ten villages constituted the ten strata of the study. From these ten villages (strata), the researcher purposively studied only rural communities where Sustainable Health for Environment Development (SHED) was actively involved in development projects. Rural communities were purposively studied. These ten rural communities constituted ten clusters in the study.

These were:

- (1) Ofumbongha
- (2) Ofumbongha
- (3) Ofumbongha
- (4) Ofumbongha
- (5) Osakan
- (6) Nkum
- (7) Okokoma
- (8) Obokpa
- (9) Ofinikpong, and
- (10) Araragh

Simple random sampling technique was applied" in selecting four villages namely;

- i. Ofumbongha
- ii. Ofumbongha
- iii. Osakan, and
- iv. Nkum.

The selection through the simple random sampling was done where pieces of papers each written Yes or No was picked by each individual in all the villages (Strata). Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents from enumerated villages. On the whole, a total of hundred (100) respondents were selected from each of the villages represented in this study. These bring the total number of the respondent to four hundred (400). The Taro Yamane's (1967) sample size determination was used to determine the actual selection.

The instrument used for this study was a structured questionnaire. Linear Regression was the statistical technique employed in the study.

Test of hypothesis

Hypothesis: Participation in local project implementation through consultation does not significantly relate with socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in terms of improved literacy status in Obubra LGA of cross river state.

Table 1: Regression model statistics between participation in local project implementation and socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in Ofumbongha in Obubra LGA of Cross River State (N = 393)

Model	R	R square	Adjusted square	R	Std. error of the estimate
1	.321 ^a	.103	.094		1.02164
ANOVA^a					
Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	47.476	2	11.869	11.371	.000 ^b
1 Residual	412.284	391	1.044		
Total	459.760	393			
Coefficients^a					
Model		Unstandardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient	T	Sig
		B	Std. error	Beta	
(Constant)	2.185	.251		8.721	.000
Organizing micro business training	.005	.054	.004	.087	.931

Significant at 0.05; df = 391, critical r = 3.053; critical f = 11.371

The hypothesis states that participation in local project implementation through consultation does not significantly relate with the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in terms of improved literacy in Ofumbongha in Obubra LGA of cross river state. The hypothesis was tested using linear regression. The independent variable is participation in local project implementation through consultation while the dependent variable is socio-economic wellbeing.

Result reveals that participation in local project implementation through consultation significantly relate with the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in terms of improved literacy (R = 321a). The adjusted R square (R. Square = 103) also showed that participation in local project implementation through consultation significantly relate with the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers. (Adjusted R² = .094) shows that the total variation of

the disaggregated independent variable (participation in local project implementation) also affects the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers. A similar significant result difference was obtained in the ANOVA model which also showed a significant F-ratio of 11.371 which was calculated against the critical F-ratio of 3.053 at 0.05 levels of significances.

The beta weight suggests that the more people participate in local project implementation the more it impacts on the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers ($P = .400$, $t = 8.721$, $P < 0.05$). Since the calculated r of 11.371 is greater than the critical r of 3.053 at the .05 level of significance, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. This implies that participation in local project implementation through consultation significantly relate with the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in terms of improved literacy in Ofumbongha in Obubra L.G.A of Cross River State.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

The study revealed that increase awareness in community development by SHED Africa has led to increased participation of community members in community projects. The study showed high female participation in community services. This attributes to the fact that SHED mobilized the women to be more sensitive to communal developmental issues. The women group ought to be mobilized. Amain (1998) argued that reaching women is a major means of meeting community. Once women are reached, one will meet the children and in so doing reach the nation. You have also reached homes, schools, farms, Local Government and rural community level. The women in the study area were mobilized to release them from the bondage of ignorance, inferiority complex that makes them think they are less competitive than their male counterpart. The reverse will hinder the well-being of the people.

Data also revealed that Ofumbongha benefited in the building and renovation of modern classrooms and school offices in primary and secondary schools in SHED's project. Data showed that SHED provided educational materials such as books and writing materials to support the children at school. This finding disagreed with Daniel (2004) who argued that the attempt to improve educational opportunities for the disadvantaged rural groups is yet to be at its fullest. The lack of adequate educational infrastructures like classroom blocks, desk, textbooks, and writing materials in the educating process in rural areas caused a serious setback to various efforts in the past, in which SHED provided and improved their literacy status, thus, impacted positively on the wellbeing of the rural dwellers.

The study showed that participation of rural dwellers in local projects implemented through consultation enhanced human resource abilities of community members. This agreed with the participative approach which explained that a key a vital means of meeting the basic needs of humans is through individual and community participation in problem-solving and decision making. A major achievement in tapping new energy resources will come through people doing more to help themselves (Ebong, 2006).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The objective of the study was to examine the impact of the impact of local participation in projects implementation on the socio-economic well-being in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings from data analysis show that participation in local project implementation through consultation significantly relates to the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers of the people. The study indicated that community members are now well informed and effectively involved in activities that promote productivity. The study recommends increasing awareness campaign through community training and participation of the locals in the implementation of local projects in Nigeria.

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