International Journal of Advanced Research in
Public Policy, Administration and Development Strategies (IJARPPADS)
Volume 3, Number 1 September, 2018

ISSN:
Hard Print: 2315-8395
Online: 2489-012X

Rethinking Community Development: An Option to Nigeria's Development Challenges

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Abstract

The search for a developmental strategy that will solve the persistent problem of development in developing states, particularly in Nigeria has taken the centre stage for successive governments and with each new of such strategies and programmes, sustainable development still eludes Nigeria. This paper is an attempt to revisit community development, an age long practice, which essence has been abused in several ways by the people and the government, as an option to overcoming Nigeria's development challenges. Community development is a coordinated approach whereby the community members undertake programs and projects in order to better the living condition of the people residing in that community. It is a self-directional effort of the people by the people and for the people aimed at improving the physical and material wellbeing of people in a community. The paper conceptualized key concepts related to the study and assessed community development as an option to overcoming Nigeria's development challenges. The study discovered that community development is an indigenous and veritable approach to solving our own problems as it emphasizes on what we can use our local resources to do; that too much interference of the government in community development to a reasonable extent has not helped, as it has generated crises in most places and gradually killed the enterprising spirit of the people. Drawing on these, the Government should re-establish the think home philosophy-the very essence of community development; help in training community development workers and provide the technical assistance for the execution of community development projects.

Keywords: *Community development, Sustainable development, Rural development, Self-help projects*

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http://internationalpolicybrief.org/journals/international-scientific-research-consortium-journals/intl-jrnl-of-adv-research-in-public-policy-admin-and-dev-strategies-vol3-no1-sept-2018

Background to the Study

Nigeria, like most developing states is mired in serious deepening development crises. Its present state is not in any way an inspiring prospect. Nigeria's economy is in quagmire, massive unemployment, security problems etc. These crises are rooted in faulty, ill-informed and unrealistic strategies which in themselves are basically alien, superficial and perfunctory. Thus from independence to date, successive governments had engrossed with the task of implementing such defective developmental initiatives. Thus development has remained largely illusive as illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and inflationary rates have continued to show unfavourable records (Okolie, 2005)

Like most African countries, Nigeria is highly endowed with both human and natural resources, as well as rich in cultural heritage thus, her underdevelopment is a paradox as nature or providence is prodigal to her. Various administrations in Nigeria had during the past presented and attempted comprehensive plans which were geared towards achieving development in the state. These plans consisted of programmes that were to enhance the general welfare of the citizens and the nation at large. In fact, development and growth has been government's top priorities since the attainment of independence. For instance, over the past five decades, Nigeria has never been short of programmes and reforms aimed at overcoming the challenges of development such as insecurity and other specific policies associated with poverty alleviation and rural community sustainable development. The Document of Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) at 50 (2010:618) showed that, majority of these programmes developed complications over the years.

Despite all the development plans by the Nigerian government, a lot of setbacks have been encountered in the developmental process. According to Osakwe (2010) the nature of Nigeria's development strategy after independence has contributed to the slow pace in achieving poverty and unemployment reduction in the country, as such, the country has not gone through the normal process of structural transformation. This implies that the strategies employed by Nigeria government have not led to the growth of productive capacities and structural transformation which are the pivot for generating any productive employment opportunities and reducing poverty to a minimal level. Thus, the effort made by various governments has not been worthwhile as unemployment, poverty and inequality is still on the increase.

It should be however noted that, since her political independence in 1960, there has been a great emphasis attached to rural community development as a factor that advances the overall socio-economic and political. It is this reality as highlighted by Alege (2005) that has made the government at different times to set up various programmes and specialized credit institutions in an attempt to transform and develop rural communities in all its ramifications and thereby moving rural dwellers from abject poverty and squalor to economic and social prosperity. This is done through a renewed interest in community development as an approach to rural development.

The concept of community development could be traced to very early times when men first realized the need for communal living. Examples of activities where collective action was necessary in order to achieve a common goal in the early times can be found in the construction of roads leading to streams or markets, building of houses, farming, especially during harvests, construction of village and market squares, (Eke, 1990). In other words, there had been vigorous indigenous efforts to improve the welfare of the communities in various parts of the country, particularly in the former Eastern Nigeria. Communities take responsibility in developing their areas and members of the communities contributed immensely in the development of their towns. The approach was participatory development without the government with the people working voluntarily in their various communities, formulating, mobilizing resources themselves and implementing community projects outside the government. Thus, before the onset of colonial administration, communities across Nigeria had employed communal efforts as the mechanism for mobilizing community resources to provide physical improvement and functional facilities in the social, political and economic aspects of their lives. Communal labour was employed in constructing homesteads, clearing farm lands, roads or path way, construction of bridges and for the provision of other social infrastructural facilities required by the people. Some of the relevant institutions were the age-grades and the village councils. Though some of these institutions have persisted, differences exist in the scope of the operations, equipment utilized and the extent of government involvement.

In this wise, Nigeria has experimented with several development plans from pre - independence era till date, yet the needed transformation has continued to elude its citizenry in spite of the robust plans. As a matter of fact, Okoli (2004) in Onah (2004) said, Nigeria has had many Development Plans by successive regimes and administrations in Nigeria aimed at poverty reduction and rural development; the approaches have usually been determined by the interpretation given to rural development by the different regimes or interventionists.

In an effort to develop the rural areas, in the submission of Moughalu (1992), third world governments have articulated policies and adopted strategies ranging from single project to integrated project approaches and from community-initiated to government-directed projects. In this manner with undue government interference in initiating and directing community self help projects; there was an erosion of the spirit behind the concept of community development. With too much of government intervention, the concept was politicized resulting in conflicts and proliferation in the governance of town unions (which used to be the institution and structure for community development) thus eroding the trust, confidence and the enterprising spirit of the people.

Objective of the Study

This paper advocates for a re-think on the concept of community development as an option to Nigeria's development challenges.

Conceptual Explanations

Community Development

The concept of community development has been used in different contexts and for different purposes by different scholars. A more comprehensive definition of community development has been expressed in the community development guidelines of the International Co-operative Administration of the United States cited in Ndukwe(2005). According to that agency, community development is "a process of social action which the people of a community organize themselves for planning an action, define their common and individual needs and problem; execute these plans with a maximum reliance upon community resources and materials from governmental andnon-governmental agencies outside the community". From all these definitions, community development is not concerned with one aspect of life, but involves total community life and needs. Ideally, it involves all the members of the community; it requires their fullest participation in decision making and then decision implementation.

People work together with or without extra support to shape their future and that of the community. Community development has to do with the elimination of such limiting circumstances of life as poverty, hunger, ignorance, sickness and fear, in a bid to bring about improvement in the standard of living of a people. Community development is a structured interventions that gives communities greater control over the conditions that affect their lives (Anam, 2014)

Scholars, who have psychological orientation and interest, adopt the behavioural approach in the conceptualization of the term of community development. Such writers would consider the term as a process of tension creation and reduction. Tensions are strong feeling of discomfort or restlessness which are the products of unsatisfied wants and which continue to persist until they are fully satisfied (Batten, 1969). The unsatisfied wants represent the felt-needs of the community and the tensions which they generate in the people provide the means of satisfying the needs. A contented community is not a developing community (Batten, 1969).

Community development should be viewed in its broadest perspective embodying a gamut of ideas. It covers all those aspects that make up a community life. It is a rural phenomenon as well as an urban one since community development is a continuous and universal process. There is a definition which should be considered as nearest to an attempt toward integrated ideology. This is found in the United Nation Economic and Social Council, document, quoted in Ekuma-Nkama (1973:2) in which community development is defined thus:

The process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of the governmental authorities to improve economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. It should not be regarded simply as a series of episodes embodied in concrete achievements, success in these important though they may be, is less important than the qualitative changes expressed in the attitudes and relationship, which add to human dignity, and increase the continuing capacity of the people to help themselves to achieve goals which they determine for themselves.

There are two salient points raised by this definition. One is that community development calls for joint efforts of both the people and government thereby dismissing the idea that community development is the sole responsibility of the people themselves. The other point is that community development should not be viewed as isolated processes of change undertaken by various communities but rather as integrated processes that contribute to national development. Some key descriptions of community development are: the firm belief of people in a community that working together can make a difference and organize to address their shared needs collectively - mass participation, people's initiative, planned programme, effective leadership, non-coercion.

Regardless of the definition, community development is not just "growth" Growth means more jobs and more investment but implies "more of the same". It does not necessarily increase choices, networks or ability to manage change. Community development often is associated with terms such as community capacity building, community vitality, empowerment, rural development or self-reliance. The basic elements of collective action, ownership and improved circumstances are common to all these ideas. There may be slight differences in emphasis. For example, while community capacity building focuses on enhancing the assets and abilities of the community, the term is essentially synonymous with community development.

Community development includes all strategies, or coordinated activities at the community level aimed at bringing about social and economic development. Idiode (1989) however asserted that three major approaches to community development in Nigeria have been identified –the extension approach, the project approach and the service approach. The extension approach involves directly teachingthe rural people improved methods and techniques of either farming, health care or how to read and write. The Ministries of Agriculture and Health use this approach. The project approach to community development is generally motivated by the government's desire to improve the economic conditions in the rural areas. It is, therefore, characterized by the establishment of economic ventures, such as government farms or rural industries. In the government circles in Nigeria, the project approach to community development is usually referred to as "rural development."

The service approach to community development callsfor the active participation and initiative of the local people. as the main strategy for community development in Nigeria. The service approach concentrates on the provision of social amenities such as postal agencies, maternity centres, pipe-borne water, dispensaries, and electricity and soon, in the rural areas. These are provided at the initiative of the community itself. The service approach to community development is known as "self-help" in Nigeria. It is at this level that self-help programmes are most apparent.

Development

The concept of development is very difficult to define because it is value loaded. It is often equated with economic growth or economic development. Indeed the two concepts are often used interchangeably, but they do not mean the same thing. Economic development is an essential component of development, yet it is not the only one. There are many other aspects of development.

According to Rodney (1972:9) "development" is a many-side process. At the level of the individuals, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well being". On the other hand Todaro (1977:96-98) says that: Development must therefore be conceived as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. In essence, development must represent the entire gamut of changes by which the entire social system turned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within the system moves away from the conditions of life regarded as materially and spiritually "better". This means that development involves the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system. This also involves, in addition the improvement of income and output, radical changes in institutions, social and administrative structures as well as in popular attitudes, customs and beliefs. The implication of these two definitions is that "development" goes beyond economic indicators. It is both a physical process and a state of mind. The institutions or structures like construction of railways, schools, hospital etc are aspect of development. The second aspect of development is that the people must change their attitudes for good. Also, Seers (1969:3) asked certain questions regarding the concept of development. He says that:

> *The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore, what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. Ifone or two of these problems has been growing worse, especially if it would be strange to call the result development even if per captain come doubled.*

It therefore means that development per se cannot be tied to economic advancement only but a general improvement in the living conditions of the people over time. Development is also aimed at improving the living conditions of the people through the effective management of both the human and materials resources. Thus, Gana (1986:2) noted that "Development concerns the capacity and creative capability of a people to effectively transform the natural resources of their environment into goods and services through the imaginative and practical application of their creative talent and productive power". This implies that the people must be empowered to be able to meet their basic needs of food,

housing, health, transport, education, employment, reduction in poverty level and increased per capita income among others. This is what is lacking in the rural areas of Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa where about eighty percent of the population live in the rural areas.

Sustainable development on the other hand is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs sustainable development aims to maintain economic advancement and progress while protecting the long-term value of the environment; it "provides a framework for the integration of environment policies and development strategies" (United Nations General Assembly, 1987). Sustainable development is seen as the process of change that harmonizes resource exploration, investment directions, institutional changes and technological orientation so as to enhance both current and future potentials to meet human needs and aspirations(Jain in Onu, 2003).

Rural Development

Rural development is a determined and concise effort to focus on the general upliftment of man's living conditions in the rural area (rural area is any given area that is not urban). It is an integrated approach to food production, provision of physical, social and institutional infrastructures with an ultimate goal of bringing about qualitative changes which culminates in improved standard of living of rural population.

Bale (1999); Gop and WB (2000) in Asian Development Bank Institute (ADB) (2007) viewed rural development to include the provision of social and physical infrastructure, the provision of financial services in non urban areas, non-farm and small-medium enterprises activities in rural communities and market towns that are more closely linked to the rural economy than they are to the economies of the larger urban cities, as well as the development of traditional rural sectors, such as agriculture and natural resource management. It noted the key elements that will facilitate the realization of rural development to include social infrastructure, physical infrastructure, and financial services. The dynamics of these three elements pave the way for the betterment of the living conditions of rural households. Observing events and issues related to such dynamics can facilitate the measurement of the constructs of rural development.

Ewuim (2010) sees rural development from the point of improvement of socio-economic and financial sides of the rural dwellers lives to the reduction of poverty, inequality and unemployment among the people thereby, giving them a sense of belonging. Rural development is a process whereby concerted efforts are made in order to facilitate significant increases in rural resource productivity with the central objective of enhancing rural income and increasing employment opportunities in rural communities for rural dwellers to remain in the area.

The main concern of rural development is to bring about the modernization of rural societies through a transition from traditional isolation to integration with the nation. It

constitutes a process of planned change for which one approach or the other is adopted for improvement of living in the rural areas on a self sustaining basis through transforming the social- spatial structures of their productive activities. Rural infrastructure constitutes the substance of rural welfare and rural welfare is not just the traditional and limited approach of raising per- capita income through agriculture but the provision of rural basic needs such as: health and medical facilities, schools, rural transportation facilities, electricity, pipe borne water etc

The History of Community Development in Nigeria

The concept of community development has been a subject of much theoretical discussion. Some of the literature on this subject tends to view community development as an old ideology while others consider it as a new concept (Batten, 1969). The concept of community is theoretically a very old one. The Athenians were able to build their Acropolis through communal labor. The Age of Pericles, for instance was regard as golden Age of 'Athens because this period saw the greatest attention being paid to the social, economic and cultural development of Athens (Abbott, 1891).

In Nigeria and in the East central state of Nigeria, many communities had in the pre-colonial days constructed roads and bridges, cleaned village paths provide themselves with clean water supply and built market places through communal labour. The isusu association which helped to enhance the economy of the people is as old as man himself in this part of Nigeria and the modern co-operative society is just a refined and modernized form of "Isusu" association (Ogunna,2007). Most of the voluntary Agency schools in the former Eastern Nigeria were built through self-help efforts of the people and the communal payment of school fees was as old as the advent of former education to the state. "Day Break in Udi" was the product of community development. Communities in Udi division provided themselves with their felt needs through their own financial and material resources (Olu- Obodo, E. C. S Review, 1973). What is new in community development therefore is not the concept but the modern application of the term and the machinery set for achieving it. Hence Batten (1969) posits that community development as we recognize it today is based on, and has grown out of, the experience of the past. What is more widely recognized than ever before and basing their policies upon them.

However it should be noted that the second half of the twentieth century to date has seen an unprecedented emphasis on community development and the passionate involvement in the problem of rural development by many political leaders of developing nations. These facts have tended to make some people feel that community development is a new concept. This new emphasis is further enhanced and intensified by a proliferation of the literature on community development during this period.

The evolution of the practice of self-help development activities thus, has the following periodic dimensions; the pre-colonial, the colonial up to 1939, the period from1940 to the Nigerian Civil War, the civil war years and the post civil war years to the present democratic settings. Before the onset of colonial administration, communities across

Nigeria as stated above had employed communal efforts as the mechanism for mobilizing community resources to provide physical improvement and functional facilities in the social, political and economic aspects of their lives. Communal labour was employed in constructing homesteads, clearing farm lands, roads or path way, construction of bridges and for the provision of other social infrastructural facilities required by the people. Some of the relevant institutions were the age-grades and the village councils. For instance, In other words, there had been vigorous indigenous efforts to improve the welfare of the communities in former Eastern Nigeria. The practice of community development, therefore, can be said to have grown with the people themselves, particularly in lgbo land. The above opinion was shared by Oduoran (1994: 21), and implied by Ekpe and Mamah (1997:60 - 62).

They noted that "most people in the Eastern Region of Nigeria know what is meant by community development and many have given money and labour to raise their standard of living in their home villages." It was realized that this generous spirit could be better harnessed for better achievement. It was, therefore, in recognition of the people's desire to help them and satisfy even those needs which were the responsibility of the government to carter for, that policies and programmes of community development aimed at enhancing these noble desires of the people were formulated and maintained. A Division of community Development in the Ministry of Internal Affairs to translate these policies and programmes into action was consequently created in 1964. The Division's direct association with Communit Development in the East may be traceable to the Community Development Training Centre, Awgu (1954) where local leaders, administrative officers, etc. were trained to enable them stimulate the villagers to undertake development projects. Although some of these institutions have persisted, the difference between self-help community development activities undertaken in thepast and those prosecuted today are not hard to find. Differences exist in the scope of the operations, equipment utilized and the extent of government involvement.

As Idode (1989) observed, in the past, self help efforts in Nigeria particularly in Bendel State now Edo and Delta States mainly related to the construction of footpaths or roads, dredging of rivers and streams, clearing of public land and market places. These activities later expanded to include the building of schools and market stalls. Projects such as pipe-borne water, road tarring, dispensaries, and cottage hospitals and so on, were not usually attempted. Equipment used was simple; hoes, cutlasses, diggers and shovels were generally utilized. The construction of walls did not follow any standard measurements as the people used their imagination to plan and construct such projects. At this stage, there was little or no government involvement as the planning and execution of these self-help projects was the sole responsibility of the people. Where the government was involved at all, was for the purposes of taking over completed projects for operation or maintenance. But where neither the state government nor the local government councils were interested in such project, the missionaries took over.

During the colonial period, community development efforts took a compulsive and coercive turn, the alien governmental apparatus with its clientele (Warrant Chief)arrangement, extorted taxes and compulsory labour from the people. Taxation by itself questioned the rationality of further labour conscription for road and other infrastructural development at the instance of the District Commissioner. The contradictions in the new development effort, therefore, did not fire the corporate imagination of the people and this was given expression by the tax debacle of1929, popularly known as the Aba women riot which questioned the whole essence of the tax laws as established then, the imposition of the Roads and River Ordinance and the apparent shirking of development responsibility by a government that had already extorted taxes for this purpose.

Apart from the establishment of governmental exploitative infrastructural apparatus, linking the major seats of government through forced labour, no serious self-help programmes eliciting popular participation was encouraged. Any development that occurred was a byproduct of profit (Hancock, 1942). Nonetheless at very local levels, the family, interfamily and village settings, the pre-colonial trappings of mutual assistance through self-help persisted for the construction of homesteads, clearing farmlands, clearing water points and for providing other socially felt needs. Church organizations were also able to cooperate with members for the building of schools. By the late 1940's however, an element of modern community concept in rural development was introduced in the form of mass mobilization for self-help activities. This was heralded by the abrogation in Britain of the Colonial Development Act which was replaced by the Development and Welfare Act in 1939.

As rightly noted by Arndt, (1981),this gave a positive economic and social content to the philosophy of colonial trusteeship by affirming the need for minimum standards of nutrition health and education. At the local level, the earlier Native Authority Councils were placed by the Country Council. Suffice it to say that this development led to the establishment of Community Development Division at the local level and thus became an important organ of government, charged with the responsibility of channeling and coordinating the efforts of the people towards promoting social and economic development (Onwuzuluike, 1987). The Development and Welfare Fund provided for the colonies by the British Government was thus able to permeate to the grassroots level through this third tier of government. By the beginning of the war in 1967, the observations of Sir James Robertson, aptly typified the state of development needs and awareness and the immense role the governments expected self-help activities to play to compliment their efforts. After the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), the need for massive reconstruction work further aroused the people a revival of the spirit of self-help which is deeply rooted in their rich traditions. Most communities realized that the only way for immediate reconstruction of the war ravaged facilities was through self-help. This period also marked the evolution of a multiplicity of social clubs with aims consonant with social insurance and self-help.

Effort by the government to motivate development at the grassroots, led to the enactment of the 1976 Local Government Reform to create new growth centres for further spatial spread of development. In addition is the creation at the state level of local government service commission, the conferment of wider powers and functions to the Local Governments by the 1979 constitution and the enactment of the special Development Fund Law, aimed at generating

funds for community development at the local level. Thus, deliberate government support became necessary to increase the spate of development activities by the various communities. The period between 1973 and 2007 marked a watershed in rural development efforts in Nigeria. The period witnessed deliberate government efforts at mobilizing the people for rural development. A number of task forces and bodies were set up to oversee, organize and to direct partnership with the people on self-help activities. They include: Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural infrastructure(DFRRI), Rural Electrification Schemes; Credit Schemes to small holders through various specialized institutions such as People's Bank, Agricultural and Cooperative Development Bank, Community Banks, NERFUND, SME Credit Schemes, The Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Universal Primary Education Schemes and Low Cost Housing Schemes, Health Scheme as the Primary Health Care Programme, National Directorate of Employment(NDE), Better Life for Rural Women Programme as well as the Family Support Programme (FSP).More recent programmes include the National Poverty Medium Industries Equity Investment Schemes (SMIEIS). The various state governments had also articulated BLU printson rural development, adopting the Integrated Rural Development Strategy as their strategic option to carry development to the masses of the people. From the foregoing historical analysis, two principles underlying community self-help activities have emerged. These are (a) the principle of individual and corporate survival and (b) the principle of societal "felt need". These two principles have variously acted as the underlying force in organizing and mobilizing the people in their pursuit of self development.

An Assessment of Community Development Efforts in Nigeria and the Imperative for a Re-think on Community Development as an Option for Overcoming Nigeria's Development Challenges

Community self-help development is a relevant strategy for rural development in Nigeria. Like the cooperative movement, the self-help movement in many parts of Nigeria rest on the rich traditions of the people. From the discourse above, local communities in the South East, Delta State and other states in Nigeria, have been undertaking community self-help projects from time immemorial. But latest development in self-help activities is the partnership which the government now forms with the people. The drive or the force that sustained self-help development activities relates to the instinct of self and corporate survival and the societal felt need. It is these two principles, which are known to vary spatially and temporally, that govern the inner dynamics of self-help activities and thus dictate the observed spatial variations in the attainment of economic well-being.

In community development approach, intrinsic value is accorded to participation. This is reflected in the opinions of development scholars that if development is to benefit the people, they must participate in planning and implementing their development plans. In some communities, most people are mere participants in self-help activities but do not in the actual sense play a meaningful role in initiating and controlling development projects in their own interest. Community elites do not often perceive their interests as identical with those of the community as a whole, though sometimes they contribute more than their share both in terms of financial contributions and individual efforts.

Also, people's participation cannot be said to have increased when some development projects were imposed on them by outsiders who may be ignorant of the real needs of the communities. In most cases, particularly where technical assistance or matching grants are made available for self-help projects, bureaucratic control over decision making becomes a prominent feature of such self-help activities.

In most cases, the success of community development efforts in Nigeria is sometimes hindered by the corrupt attitude of both development officials and the community elite. It is a common feature to hear of various situations where the rural elite spearhead self-help projects as an avenue for self-enrichment and political gains. Community development officials in like manner, fall victim to the same offence by receiving grafts to render services which are supposed to be given free of charge.

Despite the vital role community development plays on promoting sustainable development and improving the standard of living of the people, it is currently not receiving the desired attention from all tiers of government and the private sector. One of the greatest criticisms levied against community development programmes in the country is the haphazard and chaotic nature in which the various governments of the Federation handled such effort – there is no co-ordination between the efforts of the Local, State and Federal Governments. "Each undertakes its programmes in isolation of the other leading to duplication of efforts most of the time, and wastage of resources that could have been harnessed to enhance development in other spheres of Human endeavour" (Jack, 1987). It has also been pointed out that there isno proper co-ordination of community development activities in the country due to the location of Community Development Department at the Federal level. There is also inadequate collaboration between the Departments of Community Development and indigenous Non Governmental Organizations as well as International Development Agencies and the private sector. (Community Development Directors Communiques, 2003)

Inadequate understanding of local conditions and realities of the community members constitute a problem for community development I Nigeria. This is because conditions and circumstances of the beneficiaries are ever changing. Programmes designed based on the values, preconceptions and interpretations of local conditions of government officials cannot succeed if the people were not consulted before some patronage came. Gundu's (1990) therefore, observes that the problems confronting community development in

Nigeria are two angles: policy conceptualization and people's behaviour. He opines that the basic traditional institutions and values that govern the daily lives of the teeming majority of the people are scarcely given adequate cognizance and accommodation when drawing up programmes. People are therefore, alienated from the mainstream of development and made mere spectators of the development that should concern them. This is because "many Nigerians receive and treat some of the development programmes and projects as if they were "father Christmas" gifts or what has been erroneously termed "the people's share of the national cake" Anyanwu (2003) thus asserts that "the sitting of the projects were not actually based on the rural need of a community; rather it was an ex-gratia type of gesture by the government under political patronage from the God father. They are seen as government's business, and therefore, cannot be protected. It must be stated that the community development initiatives by the government have created a culture of dependence on the part of the people rather than the people themselves initiating development orientations.

Again, the inadequacy or sometimes the absences of proper mobilization of the communities make the members' positive participation in community development impossible. For instance, projects that lack majority support which are referred to as unpopular projects' by Owuamalam (1981 :26) are bound to fail, for no consensus is reached as to which project to tackle first among so many needed projects.

Lack of funds can be a problem in unity development programmes and misappropriation of funds constitutes more serious problems in community development efforts. Egboh (1987 : 173 - 174) affirms that "inadequate funding and corruption, the Nigerian cankerworm" pose problems for community development in Nigeria." The 2003 communiqué by the Directors has also pointed out that "funding of community development programmes by all tiers of government and the private sector is grossly inadequate."

Ejiofor (2000), notes that "the ruling class in the emerging nations of Africa are said to seek the greatest financial self-aggrandizement so that personal enrichment could be observed at all levels of administration." Thus, leaders cannot mobilize the people for development due to the primitive accumulation of capital in Nigeria which takes place through the award of state contracts, corruption, graft, misappropriation of public funds. Lfesinachi (2000) goes further to say that the consequences of personal enrichment are reflected in the abandonment of community projects or their unsatisfactory completion. Ejembi (2000) posits that" the problem in community development regrettably is that, very often, international expense and benefit gained from international linkages have always been converted for personal and selfish ends".

While it is the responsibility of government to create the enabling environment for community or rural development, the attendant corruption, greed and mismanagement associated with these institutions and agencies have not allowed them to achieve their desired objectives. In this connection Okpaga (2004) asserted that “Rather than making

these institutions vehicle for rural transformation, they become conduit pipes from where public funds are siphoned into private pockets".

Conclusion

The urgent need for development in developing states of Africa and the failure of many policies, programme and developmental options of the western world to arrest the development challenge has left African states with no other option than to look inward and adopt an approach indigenous to African in solving her developmental challenges. The desire for sustainable development of Nigeria would be achieved if the communities of the various states in Nigeria, the actual people suffering the socio economic difficulties most will be considered in the designing and implementation of community development programmes. Community development is an important element and a sure way to the speedy development of the rural areas in Nigeria. This is well attested to in development literature (Udoye, 1986 and 1987;Muoghalu, 1986; Okafor, 1984).

Unfortunately, the concept – community development has been abused especially in the fourth republic, the limitless intrusion of the government has led to inefficiency. Too much of government, interference has led to the proliferation of town unions, crises and violence because money is involved and instead of the communities taking the responsibility in developing their areas, there is undue reliance on the government and the politicization of communities interest. Thus, the imperative for a rethink on community development as an option to overcoming Nigeria's development challenges.

Recommendations

Drawing from the above discourse, this paper recommends the following options as a means of strengthening and utilizing the potentials of the community self help development approach as solution to not only Nigeria's development challenges but generally as an African solution to Africa's development challenges.

1. There should be a re-orientation on the concept of community development. Stakeholders should be made to imbibe the true principles of community development - the think home philosophy-the very essence of community development which is rooted in our culture.
2. The government should help in training community development workers especially on the need to involve community members in formulating and implementing self-help projects and provide the technical assistance for the execution of community development projects.
3. Emphasis should be on the people dealing with their problems – concentrating on what they can use their local resources to do and not thinking big and creating jobs for others.
4. The rampant and endemic corruption, greed and mismanagement associated with institutions for community development should be nipped in the bud.

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