

# The Local Government Role and Participation of Local Communities in Achieving 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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## Abstract

The study sought to investigate the local government role and participation of local communities in achieving 2030 agenda for sustainable development in the North West Geo-political Zone of Nigeria using a survey research design. The population of the study comprises of stakeholders in the local communities in Kebbi State. A sample of 487 stakeholders' was drawn from the population using a multi-stage cluster sampling procedure, the aim of this is to give an equal opportunity to the locals to think and plan their own feature. This underpins the need for effective leadership at the community levels in order to harness the efforts of the rural people towards their own development most especially in the area of; addressing general poverty, improving the income level of community and that of the local government, mobilizing grassroots institution and proper sensitization and mobilization of such community. The study found out that it will be very difficult, if not possible, for the mere presence of such government to make a meaningful impact in achieving sustainable development except if and only it engages itself with process of community participation in its development. It however, recommends that achieving sustainable development required knowledge and collaborative efforts of actors, stake-holders both national, international, local authorities and local communities who are the direct beneficiaries of the 2030 agenda for sustainable developments.

**Keywords:** *Local government, Sustainable development, Local communities, 2030 agenda, Grass root institution*

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### **Background to the Study**

Local government being a tier of government in Nigeria, need to take the challenge of mobilizing local communities in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. The *raison d'etre* for the establishment of local government world over is to bring the government and its activities nearer to the people (Ozor, 2002). However, it will be very difficult, if not possible, for the mere presence of such government to make a meaningful impact in achieving sustainable development except if and only it engages itself with process of community participation in its development.

Community participation entails partnership and collaborative effort established between the local government and the communities towards achieving sustainable development that are dear to the people such as primary education, entrepreneurship development etc. Ajayi, (1995) Sustainable development cannot be achieved through force or coercion, but is most likely to happen when all actors in the project participate and share their ideas, visions and responsibilities equally and democratically in steering and implementing their community development programs.

Orapin (1996), one approach in creating sustainable rural development is though giving the main actors (villagers living in a community) an equal opportunity to think and plan their own feature. This underpins the need for effective leadership at the community levels in order to harness the efforts of the rural people towards their own development.

### **Concept of Community Participation**

Community participation is the sociological process by which residents organize themselves and become involved at the level of a living area or neighborhood, to improve condition of daily life (Water, Sanitation, Health and Education etc.). it comprises various degree of individual or collective involvement (financial and or physical support, social and or political will at different level of a project. It therefore implies that residents set up management committee in charge of a development project (Maningka 2000, Herbert 2011).

Maningka (2000) adds that community participation can be seen as a process in which community members are involved at different level and degree of intensity in the project cycle i.e. initiation, formulation, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of the project with the aim to build capacity of the community as well as to maintain services created during the project after the facilitating organization have left. This is to affirm that community participation through the whole project design and implementation to evaluation ensures the reflection of community priorities and needs in activity of project and motivates after project has completed.

Community participation can also be seen as active involvement of population in one area in assemblies for data generation activity and transmission of information in local administration (Metzger 2001;80). He further maintained that in his opinion “participation is needed for the functioning of decentralization, because it facilitates accountability”.

Community participation process involves identification of stake holders, establishing systems that allow for engagement with stake holders by public officials and development of a wide participatory mechanism (Maningka 2000, Herbert 2011). The stake holders are individuals who belong to various identified communities and whose life are directly affect by specific policies and programs and or those who have basic right as citizens to express their views and opinions on public issues and action.

Chambers (2002), highlights the value of engagement with stake holders in term of greater local ownership of public actions or development projects in an inroad to greater sustainability of the projects. Chanan (2003) local communities are regarded as being “intended beneficiaries” having the greatest stake in the future of the area and knowing from experience the range of issues that need to be tackled. Benefit of community participation made it possible for community to improve their wellbeing and public acceptance (Xinhua News, 2007). It also promotes greater political and social awareness, empowerment effectiveness and expands outreach of government policies

### **Community Participation in Countries**

Community participation has been in existence overtime, various society and countries involved their communities in their development projects and programs for achieving a greater sustainability of projects and policies. In Britain, community participation was considered as “a way to speed process and generate more acceptable proposals” but the concept has grown quickly to be regarded as right in participatory democracy (Detr, 2000), and being central to the process of empowerment and necessary condition for overcoming social exclusion” (Wood, 2000;20).

In India, community participation is the second principle in the Alma Ata Declaration; it contains involvement of people in all phase of primary health care. In India, community participation is considered as a process in which individual and community collaborate in development process of a country (Marilee, 2000).

The benefit derived from community participation in India, translate as empowerment of community members to demand greater accountability from leaders by making them responsive to the need of people and also addresses quality services, (adopted from Atkison et al 2000;62). In china, participation is done through urban neighborhood communities and transformation of urban residents committee (URCS; Xu, 2007). The URC is a neighborhood – level, quasi – governmental organization present in all cities and town across China. According to PRU urban resident committees, organizing law (1989), these committees, whose employees are civil servants, are autonomous, though they often work closely with and carry out local government administrative tasks (Derleth and Koldyk, 2004) such as monitoring family planning compliance and maintaining house hold registry rolls.

In Nigeria, participation varies from one place to another with participating communities shares several characteristics, (Ton and Patric, 2003) for example, in the Eastern part of Nigeria, the Igbos had fragmented autonomous communities (Ogunna, 1996; 43) they

comprises many groups and institutions like age grades, women association, Ozo title societies, the council of elders, the people assembly (Oha) shared political authority with the chief of the community, (Anyale, 2003). The autonomous community in traditional political system was a federation of villages which all group in the community must either participate in policy initiation or implementation (Ogunna, 1996; 43).

The western and northern parts of Nigeria, where the systems are traditionally centralized, and these communities have not been given opportunity to participate in the initiation and implementation of policies in the past. Indeed, community participate in Nigeria is greatly associated with the emergence of development project partners frame work as well as the implementation of participatory approach in urban development. But this frame work has totally failed because communities are not actively participated in initiation and implementation of policies especially in Northern and western part of Nigeria. The study has shown that, it is only the community leaders are being informed about a new policy and program during implementation and this is done for them to accept but not to actively participate.

In Nigeria, the result of community participation has been very poor, no strong indication to show the result of community participation in Nigeria especially in the area of policy initiation and implementation. In most cases community are not being empowered financially and educationally to cope with the challenges. The country still remains under developed nation full of social problems like poverty, intra tribal clashes, political violence, corruption and general insecurity.

### **Concept of Local Government**

The local governments in Nigeria are indispensable tiers of government in Nigerian federating system. It is deeply rooted in the law of the land and derives its powers from the constitution. Section, 7(1) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, states that “the system of local government by a democratically elected local government council is under this constitution guaranteed”. From the above it is clear that the local government is back by law and administratively should have a democratically elected representative of people who are charged with the responsibility of moving the government towards sustainable growth for national development. Local Government is widely acknowledged as viable instrument for rural transformation and for effective delivery of social services to the people at the local level. (Musa, 2011). The guidelines for Local Government reforms in Nigeria of 1979 define local government as “Government at local level exercised through a representative council established by law to exercise specific powers and function within defined areas”.

Local government can be define as a political authority which purposefully created by law or constitution for local communities by which they manage their public affairs within the constitution. (Ogunna, 1996) The quest for wide spread development in the country and economic emancipation laid basis for the federal government to create this tier of government which is seen as the closest government to the people. Okoli (2005), defines local government as a unit of government established by act of law to administer the functions of government and see to the welfare and interest of the local dwellers under the local system.

### **Concept of Sustainable Development**

As a working definition sustainability can be defined as the practice of maintaining processes of productivity indefinitely natural or human made by replacing resources used with resources of equal or greater value without degrading or endangering natural biotic systems (Melvin, 2014). Hasna (2007), sustainability is a function of social, economic, technological and ecological themes. The term rose to significance after it was used by Brundtland commission in its 1987 report our common feature. In the report the commission coined what has become and most often- quote definition of sustainable development “as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

To clearly demonstrate the definition of sustainable development, the U.S. National Academy of Science (1999) in its report, our Common Journey: A transition toward Sustainability, the board focused on the seemingly inherent distinction between what advocates and analysts of sustainable development sought to sustain and what they sought to develop, i.e. the relation between the two, and the time horizon of the feature as shown in the figure below.

Thus the heading “what is to be sustained” the board identifies three variables i.e. – nature, life support system and community – as well as intermediaries for each variable such as Earth, environment and cultures. However, emphasis was placed on life support system which defined nature or environment as a source of service for the utilitarian life support of humankind. The study of ecosystem services has strengthened this definition over time, in contrast, some development literature values nature for its intrinsic value rather than its utility for human beings. There was also a parallel need to sustain cultural diversity, including livelihoods, groups and places that constitute distinctive and threatened communities.

Furthermore, there were three quite distinct ideas about what should be developed i.e. people, economy and society. Much more the early literature focused on economic development with the productive sector providing employment, desired consumption, and wealth. More recently, attention has shifted to human development, including an emphasis on values and goals, such as increased life expectancy, education, equity and opportunity.

Finally, the Board identified calls to develop society that emphasized the value of security and well-being of national states, regions and institutions as well as social capital of relationships and community ties.

**Figure 1:** Definitions of sustainable development

| <b>WHAT IS TO BE SUSTAINED</b>   | <b>FOR HOW LONG?</b>                                   | <b>WHAT IS TO BE DEVELOPED:</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>NATURE</b><br>Earth<br>Biodiversity<br>Ecosystem                      | 25 Years<br>“Now and<br>The future”<br>Forever         | <b>PEOPLE</b><br>Child survival<br>Life expectancy<br>Education<br>Equity<br>Equal opportunity |
| <b>LIFE SUPPORT</b><br>Ecosystem<br>Services<br>Resources<br>Environment | <b>LINKED BY</b><br>Only<br>Mostly<br>But<br>And<br>Or | <b>ECONOMY</b><br>Wealth<br>Productive<br>Sectors<br>Consumption                               |
| <b>COMMUNITY</b><br>Culture<br>Groups<br>Places                          |  | <b>SOCIETY</b><br>Institutions<br>Social capital<br>States<br>Regions                          |

**Sources:** U.S. National Research Council Policy Division, Board on Sustainable Development, and our common journey: A Transition towards Sustainability (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1999).

**Sustainable Development Goals**

The sustainable development goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, preventing deadly diseases and expanding primary education for all children among other development priorities. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of Universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our goals. 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development adopted by U.N. members 2015 came up with seventeen goals to be realized by 2030.

However, our focus in this paper is on how Local Government can make the use of agenda eleven (11) and seventeen (17) towards achieving the remaining fifteen goals. Agenda eleven (11) talks about sustainable cities and community as the goals, the objective of the agenda are

“make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.” The goal targeted at ensuring access for all adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, affordable, accessible and transport system, enhancing inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory sustainable human settlement, safeguarding the cultural and natural heritage of people among others not mentioned (U.N. 2015).

U.N. (2017) SDG Goal 11 monitoring frame work by endorsing stand alone on goal on cities (Goal 11) known as urban SDG – makes cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable – international community recognized urbanization and city growth as a transformation force for development. This first ever agreement on urban development acknowledge sustainable urban development as a fundamental precondition for sustainable development.

To ensure human settlement, inclusive, safe and resilient and sustainable cities and communities, the UN Habitat (2002) has prepared monitoring frame work as a guide to assist national and local governments in their efforts to collect analysis, valid data, and information in view of the preparation of country based reports. The frame work provides the use of necessary definitions, method of computation and metadata of indicators, including spatial indicator. It also includes global, national and local monitoring to support the implementation of SDG 11 targets

The target to be achieve in SDG 11 are presented bellow on which the local government and communities are to partner towards it.

**Table 1.**

| S/N  | TARGETS   | PROPORSE INDICATOR  |
|------|---|---|
| 11.1 | By 2030 ensure access for all to adequate safe affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slumps   | Proportion of urban population living in slump, informal settlements or inadequate housing  |
| 11.2 | By 2030 provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transportation system for all, improving road safety notably by expanding public transport with special attention to need of those in vulnerable situation women, children, persons with disability and older person       | Proportion of the population that has convenient access to public transport, disaggregate by age group, sex and person with disability.                               |
| 11.3 | By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries  | Percentage of cities or communities with direct participation, structure of civil society in urban planning and management which operate regularly and democratically |
| 11.4 | Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world cultural and natural heritage   | Share of national ( or municipal budget which is dedicated to preservation, protection and conservation of national cultural heritage including world heritage sites  |
| 11.5 | By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and number of people affected and substantial decrease the direct economic losses relative to global Gross Domestic Product caused by disaster including water disaster, with focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situation. | Number of death, missing people, injured, relocated or evacuated due to disaster per 100,000 people.  |
| 11.6 | By 2030 reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management  | Percentage of urban waste regularly collected and with adequate final discharge with regards to the total waste generated by the city                                 |
| 11.7 | By 2030 provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public space, in particular for women and children, older people and person with disability  | The average share of the built up area of cities that is open space in public use for all disaggregate by age group, sex and persons with disabilities.               |

**Source:** U.N. Habitat (2002) Urban Indicators Guidelines; Nairobi

All the 10 targets and indicators of SDG 11 are integrated in the City Prosperity Initiatives (CIP) as follows:

**Table 2.**

| S/N   | TARGETS   | PROPORSE INDICATOR  |
|-------|---|---|
| 11.1  | Adequate safe and affordable Housing  | Economic Strength   |
| 11.2  | Accessible and sustainable transportation system  | employment  |
| 11.3  | Inclusive and sustainable Urbanization  | Economic Agglomeration  |
| 11.4  | Safeguard the world cultural and natural Heritage   | Housing infrastructure  |
| 11.5  | Reduce the no of people affected by disaster  | ICT   |
| 11.6  | Reduce environmental Impact of cities   | Urban Mobility  |
| 11.7  | Provide Universal access to safe public spaces  | Public Spaces   |
| 11.7a | Support link between Urban, Peri – urban and rural settlement                             | Land use  |
| 11.7b | Increase integrate policies and plans towards mitigation and Adaptation to climate change | Economic equity, social inclusion, air quality, waste management and energy |
| 11.7c | Building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials                    | Institutional capacity, municipal finance and Governance of Urban Cities.   |

**Source:** U.N. Habitat (2002) Urban Indicators Guidelines; Nairobi

Agenda Seventeen (17) however, dwell on partnership effort toward achieving the goals the objectives there in was “strengthen the means of implementing and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development”, the goal targeted at strengthen domestic resources mobilization including thorough international support to developing countries to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection, mobilize additional resources for developing countries from multiple sources etc. (U.N. 2015).

The sustainable Development Goals are made up of 17 goals and 169 targets. The sprit and agenda of the SDGs are commendable as the combine effort to eradicate poverty and increase the development of poor countries. The SDGs is expected to take a more inclusive and diverse approach by mobilizing actors in both developed and developing countries. (Rotimi, 2016). Across the Goals 42 targets focus on means of implementation, albeit somewhat unevenly, while the final goal; Goal17 is entirely devoted to means of implementation. However, these implementation targets are largely silent about inter linkages and interdependencies among goals; regardless of their ambition to universal, indivisible and inter linked (Sustainability Science, 2016).

Spreading implementation targets throughout the goals encourages systemic implementation. To be successful there must be greater attention on inter linkages in three areas 1) Across Sectors (e.g. finance, agriculture, energy and transport); 2) Across societal actors (local authorities, government agencies, private sector and civil society; and 3) between and among low, medium and high income countries. (Rotimi, 2016).

The SDG agenda needs no only pay attention to implementing the substantive goals (SDG 1 – 16) in integrated ways but also ensuring that means of implementation in Goal 17 and the other goals are themselves and integrated under takings. The measure of our success in

implementing sustainable development goals in Africa will be attainment of the components of the 17 goals by 2030. It can be done, provided that the key factors important for successful implementation of SDGs, high level of political support, ownership by the countries, institutional and human capacity development, inclusive of development process, mutual accountability and policy reforms are established and sustained. The success of SDG in Africa is hinged on the credible means of implementation (Rotimi, 2016).

High level political forum on SDG (HLPF) (2018), state that in their review “strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development “seeks to build global partnership to support and achieve the ambitious goals targets of the 2020 agenda bringing together national governments, international community, civil society, the private sectors and other actors. Despite some advances in certain areas in 2017, need to be done to accelerate progress. All stake holders will to intensify and focus their efforts on the areas where progress has been slow.

SDG 17 reflects a holistic approach to means of implementing for the 2030, including 19 targets that span finance, technology, capacity building, trade and systemic issues. In addition, the means of implementation are integrated across the other goals through dedicated targets, underlining their cross-cutting nature. The concrete policies and action of Addis Ababa action agenda for financing development provide a strong foundation to support SDG progress. (High level political forum on SDG (HLPF), 2018)

### **Local Government Role and Community Participation in the Link to Achieving 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

The following are some of the role the local government could play to make communities to participate in achieving 2030 agenda for sustainable development

1. Addressing general poverty: the generality of rural populace in Nigeria lives below the poverty line thus, lives in hunger and starvation. A man who cannot feed himself, or better still not feed well, may lack the competence, confidence for rational thinking and can hardly perform his rights of effectively participate in decision making etc. poverty means the lack of income or shortage of assets; the lack of competence, confidence, disempowerment etc.; has also deprivation of national currency; it is also common to speak poor understanding or culture, or spirit (Singer, 2006). For better community participation in government programs there is the need to squarely address poverty so that their rational thinking and capacity to involve in decision making that affect their wellbeing will be improved.
2. Improving the income level of the community and that of the local government: the local government and the community must be financially buoyant to effectively participate in development project.
3. Mobilizing grassroots institutions: local organizations are a necessary, if not a sufficient condition for accelerated development which emphasizes improvement in productivity and welfare of the majority of the rural people. Before the advent of colonialism various Nigerian communities have through self-help effort using such grassroots institutions as age grade, to develop themselves. Grass root institutions are

in no doubt a great force to reckon with especially when harnessed well and channeled in the right direction in the realization of community sustainable development objectives. They possessed a quantum of both human, material and to extent financial resources which yearn to be tapped and in the right direction for optimum result. It therefore behooves on the practitioners to systematically integrates and utilize these grassroots institution as a way of attaining sustainable development goals.

4. Proper sensitization and mobilization: the local government as the closest government to citizens has the opportunity to tap in for sensitizing and mobilizing of people. (Nnamani, 2012:110) believes that political participation serves the following function in a political system:
  - Exposes the political issues and situation to both the rulers and ruled;
  - Affords the people the opportunity to express their opinion
  - Exposes the greatest opportunity for majority
  - Creates order and stability on the system.

In Nigeria today, there is disconnection between people and government because local government serves as a centre where local people come and get informed about policies of government and their input towards government programs. The federal government crippled the system of local government but has allowed the state governments to make experiments with it thereby misinforming the people on the objectives of the local government. Any nation that does not accord respect to the rural people through adequate information of government vision has done well to deform the largest number of its citizens.

### **Prospect of Community Participation in Sustainable Development**

Despite the challenges involved in mobilizing community to participate in their development, the following measures can be taken to bring about prospectus on community efforts towards their development.

1. Steady improvement in community economic growth and development through provision of rural infrastructure, other basic necessity of life and good governance at the grassroots to enable the rural community to cope with problem of poverty and thereby performed their civic obligation;
2. Effective and equitable distribution of common wealth through the instrument of distributive and regulatory public policy;
3. Provision of adequate funds by the other higher tiers to the local government to improve the capacity in local development, and also the need for local government to diversify their local revenue base through taxation, levies and rates
4. Creating awareness towards attitudinal changes through value reorientation of both leaders and led, especially with regard to government work, property and public life.
5. Effective and efficient dissemination of information and the use of propaganda to sensitize and arouse the interest of rural masses in community participation. Information is power and thus, vital in human dealings. Without effective information and subsequent dissemination, the rural dwellers may not be aware of the benefit of participating in their community development. As (Oluwa, 1988:21) noted, “there is no limit to the sacrifice that people are willing to make when they understand

that they themselves would be the final beneficiaries. Hence community unions and cooperative association have proved effective and successful again and again in raising the resources to finance important projects where many are centrally – dominated by local governments have failed.

6. Strengthening the grassroots institution so that they can be used in ensuring sustainability of projects in their community. Such institutions like the town union, the age-grade, the women's wing, the traditional rulers, the philanthropic group etc. are all grassroots institution that can be mobilizes to participate in their community development. The local government should therefore, avail itself the opportunity by harnessing the forces of these institution and guiding them into a constructive positive channel for optimum result.

### **Conclusion**

This study evaluated the role of local government in mobilizing community participate in development, emphasis on achieving 2030 agenda on sustainable development. It identified local government as the nearest government to the people and thus a channel through which the community feels the pulse of other higher level of government. To this effect, the paper contends that local government is the hub for social, political and economic mobilization and galvanization of citizens for effective participation towards achieving agenda for sustainable development. The study identified several roles the local could play in community mobilization towards sustainable development and they include: addressing general poverty, improving the income level of community and that of the local government, mobilizing grassroots institution and proper sensitization and mobilization of such community.

### **Recommendations**

Achieving Sustainable Development required knowledge and collaborative efforts of actors, stake-holders both national, international, local authorities and local communities who are the direct beneficiaries of the 2030 agenda for sustainable developments. To fully do that the following measures need to be taken

1. In an attempt to achieved SDGs agenda, there is the need take more inclusive and diverse approach by mobilizing actors in both developing countries which is component of SDG Goal 17.
2. Also the need for greater attention on inters linkages in three areas i.e. 1) Across sectors (such as finance, agriculture), 2) Across societal actors such as (local authority, government agencies, private sectors and civil societies) and 3) between and among low, medium and high income countries;
3. Establishing concrete policies and action needed to be put in place for implementing SDGs which are integrated across other goals through dedicated targets underlining their cross-cutting nature. The Addis Ababa Agenda for finance development provide foundation to support SDG progress;
4. In addition, a strong partnership need to be establish between local authority's local communities, national government and international community in achieving SDGs targets;

5. There is also the need to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development, this can be done through strengthening domestic resources mobilization, including international support and improving domestic tax capacity and other revenue collection;
6. For the successful implementation of SDG, the attainment of the component of the 17 goals by 2030, could only be done if the key factors important for the successful implementation are put in place such as political support, ownership by countries, institutional and human capacity development, inclusive of development process, mutual accountability and policy reforms are established and sustained.

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