

Community-driven Development Approach: A Panacea for Sustainable Rural Development in Nigeria

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Abstract The work beheld the vitality of community –driven development as a panacea for midwifing the much touted sustainable rural development. Secondary data were collected qualitatively on the trends of rural development right from the pre-independent era till this current phase, also on the concept of development, community development, and Community-driven development. The submissions of scholars in the development science were analysed through content analysis. Critically, the study delved into the vantage position of community-driven development as a channel through which sustainable rural development can be attained by juxtaposing two scenarios. The paper opined that community-driven development is the missing link to ensuring sustainable rural transformation. It was observed that all developmental initiatives geared towards achieving an all-round development of rural community in Nigeria had not yielded the desired results, knowing full well that the larger percentage of the African population dwell in rural community, and that the economic transformation of sub-Saharan Africa hinges on its rural development. Therefore, study recommends rural people inclusiveness in terms of participation, transparency, probity and enhanced capacity in implementing rural developments projects, and in all other efforts that will translate to overall development of rural people.

Keywords: *community-driven, development, rural, sustainable Panacea, Nigeria*

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1. Introduction

Nigeria has a rural population of about 49.9% in 2018 [1] and the proportion keeps diminishing owing to rural-urban drift as it was 80.7% in 1963 and 51.0% in 2011 [2]. It could be deduced from the statistics that the population of rural community has been dropping exponentially which is believed to be connected with dearth of social infrastructural facilities which had relegated the rural community to the background. The attendant effect of rural-urban drift is pronounced by dwindling quantity of food production as reported by the [3]. Rural community remains the factory for food production, it is a pivot that holds the existence of the urban areas, as food remains a fundamental factor that sustains human existence [4]. Rural development is measured by broad of indicators such as availability and functionality of infrastructures, suitability of available housing to decent human habitation, level of functionality of education as well as other socioeconomic parameters. The functionality of the aforementioned socioeconomic indicators depends on key factor that has community members at its epicenter. The vantage position of rural

people in developmental efforts from successive governments had not been adequately appreciated and their potentials downplayed and ineffectively harnessed, which has been responsible for unsustainability of most of developmental efforts in many rural communities [3]. Developmental agenda during the pre-colonial era on rural community were principally channeled towards production of cash crops as raw materials for the industrialized country home of colonial masters. The goal was so narrow, subjective and self-seeking. However, successive governments in Nigeria ranging from the military and democratic experimentations have not heralded the much anticipated holistic rural development that will be characterized by the development to the fullness of potentials of the rural populace. It should be understood that rural populace has their peculiarities, such as; close interrelationship, social and cultural cohesion, closeness to nature, and respect for tradition and customs. Therefore, developmental effort must begin with people and end with them in other to guarantee sustainable development. Having people inclusiveness is germane in every rural developmental effort. It is in the consideration of the forgoing that; this study is aimed at x-raying the potency of community- driven development towards achieving sustainable rural development.

1.1. The Concept of Rural and Rurality

The term rural area has a negative connotation to uninformed minds, even amongst literate persons, it is sometimes implying a relegated area, backwardness, an area populated by uncivilized people, isolated area of no infrastructural presence. Conversely, rural sociologists in developed countries had a convincing look at rural areas as those geographical locations with low population density and closer to nature in outlook often unspoiled by human exploitative endeavour and maintaining purity of nature [5]. But developing countries of the world see rural areas as a geographical entity that is characterized by engagement of people mainly in primary activities as the foundation for economic development, a base for food production, a major market for domestic manufacturers and sources of capital formation for the country [2,6].

Rural areas in Nigeria is further characterized by unattractiveness to live, low standard of living, illiteracy, malnutrition, low level of access to infrastructural facilities such as electricity, hospitals, good roads, schools, recreational centres, and other factors guaranteeing better life for mankind [5]. It is inferred from the above that rurality is viewed descriptively as the definitions only captured those things that are measurable and such observable, while the sociocultural characteristics which often play significant role in developing effective planning and policies that address the well-being and sustainability of rural communities were not addressed or captured. A more concise definition of rurality was submitted by [7] as a condition of place-based homeliness shared by people with common ancestry or heritage and who inhabit traditional, culturally defined areas or places statutorily recognized to be rural. It is further identified as a place where purity of tradition is sustained, a place of tradition rather than modernity, a place where agriculture is predominantly the means of survival, a place of nature rather than culture, and changelessness rather than dynamism [7]. From the foregoing, rurality is a term describing a geographical area of agricultural engagement, an enclosed culture and tradition, a place of relatively low population density, of close affinity to nature, and rare nonfarm activities. However, the definition of rurality is expected to be channeled towards addressing people's sociocultural features which entails their perceptions and construction of rurality, and the type of social environment in which they cohabitate, which are very germane to midwife an effective and sustainable rural development.

1.2. Rural Development

Development is in fits and starts, it is never static, always evolving, a conscious effort geared towards addressing emerging issues counteracting human development. One of the fundamental responsibility of a society is to be able to fashion out its development agenda aimed at harnessing its abundant potentials, build its own capacities and remove encumbrances to productive engagements so as to facilitate development that will enhance the standard of living of the people therein [1].

Development is multifaceted and a normative concept having different meanings to different people depending

on how it is viewed. Reverence [7] opined that development entails creating the condition for the realization of human personality. He noted that development has to be marked with reduction in poverty, unemployment and inequality, a high level of nutrition, high health standard, low infant mortality rate. Seers [6]: Reference, [5] defined development as involving not only economic growth, but also conditions in which people in a country have adequate food, jobs and income inequality among themselves is greatly reduced. However, development connotes rise in productivity, ease of production, reduction in the cost per unit output, improved institution, availability and utilization of modern knowledge, rational and effective coordination of policies to reduce or completely eliminate undesirable conditions that are capable of inhibiting the advancement of social system which are hitherto perpetually dwelling in obscurity and far from the current reality of their expected level of performance. In the same vein, [8] opined that development involves changes in structure, composition and performance of the forces of production as well as qualitative improvement in the living standards of the people through the eradication of poverty, hunger, squalor and social deprivation. It could be deduced from the above that development is not static but an ongoing efforts geared towards ensuring uninterrupted development of human potentials. Development cannot take place without the people themselves as all indicators of it revolves round the people, and it is measured normatively as it impacts on the living standard of the ultimate beneficiaries of the development interventions which of course are the people.

It is implied that rural development connotes the overall development of rural communities. It is a multi-dimensional concept, and all-encompassing, which involved all aspect of productive engagements such as agriculture and allied activities, village and cottage industries, farming practices, system of education, training centres, health care and medical facilities, environmental conditions, housing accommodation, infrastructure, technology, skills development opportunities for the individuals, administration and management practices, employment opportunities and human resource development.

2. Methodology

This is a qualitative research, data used were obtained through secondary and empirical sources. The data was analysed qualitatively through content analysis of various development initiatives and programs, and justification of community-driven development to herald sustainable development of rural communities.

2.1. Overview of Rural Development Initiatives and Programs in Nigeria

Why the concentration of developmental efforts on rural areas? Agriculture employs nearly three-quarters of Nigeria's work force, as is the case in most of sub-Saharan Africa. Agriculture is the principal source of food and livelihood in Nigeria, making it a critical component of programmes that seek to reduce poverty and attain food

security in Nigeria. Therefore, concentration of developmental efforts on rural areas is justified [9]. There had been a number of policies and developmental strides geared towards attaining sustainable socioeconomic transformation of rural communities in Nigeria. It is justified because rural transformation is a requisite foundation for social and economic progress [10], Reference [2]. Nigerian government has introduced and adopted a number of strategies towards improving the productive potentials of rural people knowing full well that there existed a wide gap from what is and what ought to be. Therefore, there is a need to address the various challenges hindering the much touted rural development which include;

1. rural-urban migration,
2. high level of adult illiteracy,
3. hunger and malnutrition,
4. diseases and unemployment,
5. conservativeness through attachment to traditional values and customs,
6. lack of productive skills,
7. vicious cycle of poverty,
8. and poor infrastructural presence [10].

Nigerian government had never remained unperturbed with respect to the issues bedeviling rural communities by successive governments right from the period of independence. The following are the various initiated rural development programmes targeted at the rural sector [4]. They include:

- a. National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP)
- b. River-Basin Development Authority (RBDA)
- c. Agricultural Development Programme (ADP)
- d. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)
- e. The Green Revolution (GR)
- f. Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS)
- g. Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)
- h. Better Life for Rural Dwellers
- i. National Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC)
- j. National Directorate of Employment (NDE)
- k. National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA)
- l. National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)
- m. Primary Health Care Programmes (PHCP)
- n. National Rural Roads Development Fund (NRRDF)
- o. Rural Banking Scheme (RBS)
- p. Family Support Programme (FSP)
- q. Universal Basic Education (UBE)
- r. Expanded Programme On Immunization
- s. The Nomadic Education Programme
- t. Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS)
- u. Ferry Transport Schemes (In The Riverine Areas And Lagos)
- v. Low-cost Housing Estate Schemes
- w. Federal Environmental Protection Agency
- x. Flood and Soil Erosion Control Programme

Identified Factors Inhibiting Rural Development Initiatives' Sustainability in Nigeria

Sustainability of rural development initiatives in Nigeria is a mirage. All efforts of policy makers geared towards removing encumbrances deterring rural development have never witness a commensurate result, if

not in futility. Among the factors responsible for the failure of the objectives of the successive rural development initiatives is the exclusion of important stakeholders and professionals in policy formulations, planning and implementation [11]. It implies that local contents in terms of the peculiarity of the people that the programme is meant for were more often than not giving the utmost priority. Local leaders and other opinion leaders are important stakeholders that should be given a rightful place in every stage of rural developmental effort. Conflicting and overlapping programmes and projects also contributed to the unsustainability of governmental efforts towards removing the veil of development in rural community. Every successive government often forget that governance is a continuum, instead of ensuring continuity in the projects embarked upon by their predecessor, they put in place a new project that is a similitude of the uncompleted previous effort [7]. This is not only a colossal waste of the money of tax payers, it also depicts poor sense of coordination of governmental activities.

2.2. Community–Driving Development as a Missing Formula; A case study of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative in Nigeria

The initiative as a brainchild of the World Bank with the support of the African Development Bank, was conceived primarily to provide portable water for rural people. The agency among others was saddled with the responsibility to:

1. control and manage rural water works
2. establish, manage, extend and develop rural water works for the purpose of providing water for consumption.
3. provide rural boreholes, well sinking, rural sanitation and maintenance.
4. mobilize rural people for community training and development
5. create public relation in rural community on the need to embark on self-help projects and their maintenance.
6. promote and encourage communal interest and participation in rural water works; and

It was evident that manual (Plunger) pump were installed for the sunk boreholes for the use of most rural communities in some selected states in Nigeria. The purposes of the initiative were felt for a while not until the boreholes were having technical issues. Within a short period of time, the sunk manually pumped boreholes were in moribund and left unused because of the state of disrepair. Currently, hardly could one see any of the sunk manual pump boreholes functioning again in most of the rural areas of the states where the projects were implemented. The humongous and colossal amount of fund spent in the execution of those projects had gone down the drain.

It could be deduced from the scenario that a lot of things probably were not taking into consideration before the boreholes were sunk in the rural locality, some of which are stated hereunder: Participatory rural appraisal

might have been poorly done, if done at all. Need assessment perhaps were not carried out. Local leaders and opinion leaders in the rural communities were not properly carried along. The beneficiaries were not usually involved in the various stages of project development. Hence, could not see the need to repair and sustain the functionality of the sunk boreholes.

2.3. The Success of FADAMA Project in Nigeria Hinged on Collaboration with the Key Stakeholders as One of the Principles of Community-Driven Development

Fadama means irrigable lowland, usually the low-lying plains that overlay shallow aquifers that straddle Nigeria's major river system. FADAMA was a pilot agricultural project that started in 1992. It was primarily conceived and designed to offer basic irrigation and other supports to farmers in selected States for the project. However, FADAMA I was not a total failure but FADAMA II had an all-inclusive package with the introduction of a groundbreaking Community-Driven Development model and helped institutionalize local stakeholders' engagement in community decision making. FADAMA III was characterized by the expansion of the project geographically and the model became an adorable system of midwifing a successful agricultural development project. The FADAMA project came to an end in 2019, ever before then, projects were centrally managed, with decisions made by the central body without the inclusion or input from the potential beneficiaries, the results were abysmal failure. The FADAMA project which adopted all-inclusive model helped to build strong farmers' institution and created a large repository of knowledge on the challenges of delivering local development. It recognized the importance of strengthening smallholders' organisations to empower them to administer shared assets and other resources, facilitate project activities, and improve their bargaining power. The community groups called FADAMA User Groups (FUGs) were the organizational units that provided a pivot for the operation of group activities. Based on the economic interest, they were the beneficiaries' closest representatives. User Groups were bundled together with other groups nearby into broader FADAMA Community Association. The sustainability of the model hinged on forming the groups involved different resource user groups learning to respect each other's opinion, rights and consider the impact their decisions had on others [12].

2.4. Key Features of Community-driven Development

1. Local participation in designing and planning – Participation is key to the sustenance of any project, it has become an article of faith a fundamental principle for any successful project or programme. Participatory approach is critical to the sustainability of any developmental effort for the rural people. Community engagement in planning, designing and execution and evaluation of the project allowing community to proactively develop a vision/plan to evaluate new/future opportunities from inside/outside forces and the single most important key to

improving the livelihood It has been a fiction paper participation rather than functional participation in rural development programme. Participation implies the involvement of a broad spectrum of the community in all phases in rural development programme. Participation implies the involvement of a broad spectrum of the community in all phases of developmental activities from project selection and design through to execution and ex-post evaluation participation involves improvement of the poor so that they may exert their own influence independently of government direction on decision making and related activities of development projects [13]. The strategies should therefore be on development by the people rather than by elites. It is when people are involved actively that their sense of belonging can be aroused and they will do everything possible to ensure the utmost performance of the project, rather than a preconceived project brought to them without their input in the need assessment.

2. Appreciation of local ability in the implementation and management of projects - Local people are not dummies. Local leadership exercise control upon their subjects, therefore should be factored into every stage of the project right from the need assessment up till the point of execution of projects. They are legitimizers. Community-based participatory research model should be employed, which entails engaging the services of the locals in design, collection, analysis and dissemination of information on the project. This has a great propensity to make the project a success, and enhance sustainability as it triggers we-fillings in the locals, which is germane to the sustainability of projects. The residents need support in sharing their assessment of the impact of the work and if power is shared from the previous steps we will see actual accountability connected to success and failure

3. Transfer and control of resources — In opposition to the current system that devalues communities and residents and encourages viewing communities through a deficit lens, build a system that increases knowledge of the value of resources and a plan to transfer those assets to the community as one of the measurable outcomes of the work.

4. Primary beneficiaries are from the community — Assess the value of resources and outcomes connected to the work and insure they do not disproportionately leave the community.

5. Locally led implementation and management of work — Not only hire local but continue to support capacity building so that the local leadership of staff and board continues to increase over time. Focus on intentional succession planning in response to either solving problems or having moved the needle enough to warrant new leadership, whether it be by a new community development corporation (CDC), a civic association or other individuals from the community with new ideas and solutions.

6. Locally led evaluation, assessment, and accountability — Utilize community-based participatory research models that employ empowered community engagement processes which include engagement in design, collection, analysis and dissemination. Support residents in sharing their assessment of the impact of the work and if power is shared from the previous steps we

will see actual accountability connected to success and failure.

3. Conclusion and Recommendation

Considering the foregoing, the gap had been identified, and the potency of Community-driven development has been uncovered, thereby seen it as a veritable tool to midwife the much touted sustainable rural development in Nigeria.

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